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# The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature

BY

A. MARMORSTEIN, Ph.D.

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## INTRODUCTION

(1) THE doctrine, the history and meaning, the development and influence of the subject to be discussed and explained in the following pages, is based on two great ideas and ideals of Judaism, which dominate the sayings and thoughts of the sages of Israel in the first four centuries of the Common Era. These sages taught, with few exceptions, that one is able to acquire merits before God. There are two ways of accumulating merits: negative and positive. The Church Fathers speak of the former, the Rabbis of the latter. Since a man is justified by faith alone, without the works of the law (Rom. 3. 28), he can obtain merits only by avoiding the *indulgentia dei*, i. e. that which is not forbidden.<sup>1</sup> The Jews, however, were taught how one can obtain positive merits (Tert. *Apol.* 21, 4<sup>1a</sup>). Men and women can rise by positive deeds to such a height of moral beauty, virtue, and accomplishment, in spite of their natural shortcomings and innate faults, that they are regarded as meritorious before God. What else does this imply but the idea that each individual human life, every soul, is of immeasurable value? The inestimable value of every person imposes upon him high duties and responsibilities on the one hand, and allows him to participate in privileges and merits on the other. The former requires him to establish his life on the ethical sentiments laid down in the Torah, to walk on the 'path of life', and to contribute to the happiness and prosperity of the world.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, second marriage, to escape persecution, keeping away from wine and meat, from luxuries, v. Tertullian, *ad Uxorem*, I, 2; *de Uxore*, 18; C. Wirth, *Der Verdienst-Begriff in der christlichen Kirche nach seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Leipzig, 1892-1901.

<sup>1a</sup> v. H. Schrörs, *Zur Textgeschichte und Erklärung von Tertullians Apologetikum*, Leipzig, 1914, p. 43, 3.

The latter assures him of reward and saves him from punishment. Yet the theological speculations and philosophical teachings of the rabbis strove after something higher than reward, and sought for more than escape from punishment in the ordinary sense of the word. Our chief concern will be to describe how men or women can obtain merits, according to the teachings of the scribes, which shall benefit not merely themselves, but also their posterity, their fellow-creatures, their ancestry, their whole generation, not merely during their life, but even after their departure from the land of the living. Even in the hereafter their merits protect and heal others. Judaism further teaches, as a supplement to the doctrine of imputed merits, the law of imputed sin. The sin and evil-doing of the wicked react upon the life and fortunes of their children, their contemporaries, and others who ought to be spared and saved. This is nothing else but the law of the solidarity of mankind, of brotherhood of peoples and nations. Translated into the vernacular it means: One man, or one set of society, or even one people cannot do good or harm without influencing beneficently or adversely the fate of their nearest kith and kin as well as their whole environment, yea, even the whole world.

Our task will be to collect the Agadic material on this subject. The first chapter deals with the sayings and teachings of the Tannaim and the Amoraim as to the doctrine of imputed merits and sins. Since the 'anonymous' Agadah must necessarily be taken into consideration, they have to be connected with the problems arising out of this doctrine. The second chapter describes the views about the merits which were believed to have caused the creation of the world, which secure the existence of the Universe, and wrought the miracles as well as safeguarded the life of Israel as a religious community during its historical course. There must be a merit for everything. Without work nothing can be achieved. A reason has to be found, why the world was created. It was made for some purpose

or aim. For whose sake? There are different theories trying to give a more or less plausible answer. The same is the case with the second question: Who or what are the moral pillars of this world? The scribes were even more deeply interested in the third problem. With profound feeling and truthful sentiment they endeavoured to give a philosophy of their ancient history by means of this doctrine. It was not an accident, it was not blind chance that God had chosen the fathers, had selected Israel among the nations, had redeemed the children of Abraham from Egypt, had divided the sea, given them manna and quails in the wilderness, made them cross the Jordan, inherit the Holy Land, and so on. They must have had merits; what were they? The third chapter deals with the various answers to these questions. They can be briefly grouped in two classes. The merits of the fathers, and those of the righteous. Hereto is added also a chapter on the merits of children which are available for the fathers, and the opposition which arose by some misrepresentations of the doctrine, to the idea of Zechuth Aboth. The last chapter speaks of the different means which acquire merits; they are based on: Faith, Work, and Love.

In the Introduction we have to treat first of all philologically the different terms which denote the ideas underlying this doctrine in their various forms. This leads to the description of the doctrine of God's grace as far as it is connected with our subject. Secondly, to the idea of treasures upon heaven and the share in the future life. Thirdly, the theological, philosophical, ethical, and social aspects of this doctrine will be pointed out. A bibliography of works on and references to this doctrine in more recent literature will conclude this Introduction.

(2) All writers on ethics agree that the philological investigation of the words signifying the ethical conception is necessary for the understanding of the doctrine or idea. The word reflects as in a mirror the successive development or aberration of the way of thinking. Whilst,

however, the oral tradition does not appear always reliable, that of literary documents offers a true description of the feeling and notion. The words on which this doctrine we are discussing is based, by which its meaning is expressed, are many. The most familiar to all is the noun זכות (Latin, *meritum*) and the verb זכה (*merere—mereri*). These are, it is doubtful whether originally or not, legal terms. However, in the conscience of the people, in ordinary talk, זכי בי meant 'Do with me an act of charity in order that thou mayest acquire a merit.' זכה meant to most people, who happened not to be lawyers and judges, 'He deserved, he got merits, he is worthy.' זכות signified *a merit*, pl. זכויות *merits*. The noun is contrasted by (a) חטא, (b) עבירה, and (c) חובה. It must be, therefore, antithetic to sin, transgression, or guilt. For (a) we find this contrast in the composition גרם חטא and גרם זכות. A punishment *caused* by some sin, or a blessing caused by some merit. A sin originates misfortune, a merit acquired caused happiness. The same is the case in other constructions זכות חולה and חטא חולה.<sup>2</sup> The same contrast can be discerned in המוכה and המחטיא.<sup>3</sup> The former causes others, by his example, teaching, or conduct to acquire merits; the latter as the originator of erroneous views or perverted ambitions, to lead others astray. This merit to make others imbibe high sentiments and to do good works, guards a law-giver or teacher, a leader or worker, from sin, and all the merits are ascribed to him who was the spiritual father of those works (חטא הרבים v. זכות הרבים תלי בו). It is just the other way about with him who teaches sin and shows the way to apostasy. Moses on one side, Jeroboam ben Nebat on the other side, illustrate the case. A later commentary gives a somewhat naïve explanation for this fact,<sup>4</sup> yet we can understand the teaching very well without it. Can there, namely, be a higher merit

<sup>2</sup> v. Mid. Cant. Z., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> v. Aboth, 5. 18; Aboth R. Nathan, ed. Schechter, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> v. Eccles. r. 4. 1.

than to teach others virtue? to strengthen those of little faith in faith? and to show a higher outlook and aim of life to those sunk in the depth of worldly pleasures, ambitions, and desires? The sin of achieving the reverse of this endeavour can have no pardon and atonement. The historian will have to recognize that this is not an arbitrary theory of what could and should have happened, but a statement supported by the records reported in the pages of history.

Just as 'merit and sin', so are contrasted 'merit and transgression' (עבירה v. זכות). By performing the commandments, as well as by transgressing them, one gathers capital, i.e. a treasure of good or bad deeds; yet the fruits are different according to the character of the work.<sup>5</sup> Another idea is conveyed by the antithesis of זכות and חובה 'merit and guilt'. R. Hanina ben Gamaliel says: 'Merit and guilt are never interchanged, except in the case of Reuben and David'.<sup>6</sup> Great merits, acquired by one, cannot lessen his burden of guilt, just as guilt does not diminish merits. R. Simon ben Eleazar speaks also of both in his remarkable saying, 'In the days of the Messiah there shall be neither merit nor guilt.'<sup>7</sup> The same contrast as between מוכה and מחטיא is repeated in מוכה and מחייב.<sup>8</sup> The righteous men get merits, and cause advantages thereby to accrue to their children and children's children (שמוכין לבניהם ולבני בניהם); the wicked, however, cause their own guilt, and bring about punishment to late descendants. Aaron and Canaan are given as examples. In the first case the merit of the father helped the children (שעמד להם) so that they escaped the fate of their brethren; in the second instance the guilt of Canaan prevented Tobi, the slave of R. Gamaliel from being ordained (שחובת אביהם)

<sup>5</sup> v. Isa. 3. 11; Prov. 1. 31; Tos. Pea., p. 18, l. 5, f., e. g. j. Pea. 16 B, Aboth R. Nathan, p. 120.

<sup>6</sup> Sifre Deut., § 347.

<sup>7</sup> b. Sabb. 151 B; Eccles. 12. 1, R. Hijja b. Nehemia, Lam. Z., p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> b. Joma 87 a.



(גִּרְמָה לָהֶן). Instead of multiplying these illustrations, which have to be repeated in the course of this discussion, we may summarize our impression that זכות is something which is opposed to sin, transgression, and guilt. Both are influential in opposite directions on the life and justification of men. They revert not merely upon man's own works but upon contemporaries and posterity as well. The term זכות is used in the following compositions, put in alphabetical order: (1) בָּקֵשׁ (v. also חָפֵשׁ), (2) גִּלְגָּל, (3) גֶּרֶם, (4) עֹמֵד, (5) כִּרְע, (6) לְמַד, (7) מִצָּא, (8) נִכְה, (9) סִייעַ, (10) תִּלְה, and (11) חֲטָא. Some were also found in connexion with חֲטָא and חֻבָּה (e.g. 3 and 11). Very frequent is the contrast between זכה and לא זכה. This lexicographical apparatus is more instructive than it may appear at first sight. It enables us, namely, to get a closer acquaintance with the thoughts of the scribes. An anonymous teacher remarks to Gen. 12. 6, עַד עָכְשֵׁי נִחְבָּקֵשׁ לָהֶם זְכוּת בְּאֶרֶץ.<sup>9</sup> Abraham passed through the land of promise, for he could not yet settle down, because a merit had still to be sought for the inhabitants of the land. God tries to find merits even for the Gentiles. God also seeks merits for Israel.<sup>10</sup> With reference to the sacrifice of Isaac, the phrase is used גִּלְגָּל זְכוּת.<sup>11</sup> The composition זכות ליום זכאי וחובה ליום חייב occurs in the saying מְגִלְגֵּלִין זְכוּת לְיוֹם זְכוּת וְחֻבָּה לְיוֹם חַיִּיב.<sup>12</sup> One attributes and ascribes the reward of merits to a happy season (day), and the event arising out of guilt to an unhappy time. Merits cause reward (for instance, redemption, future salvation), guilt necessitates calamities (for instance, destruction of the Temple); they take place in seasons which are regarded as happy or unhappy. Both

<sup>9</sup> Gen. r. 39. 22, ed. Theodor, p. 379, 4 f.

<sup>10</sup> Exod. r. 30. 5: זְכוּת מִצְוֹתָיו מִתְנַחֵם עָלָיו מֶה שֶׁעָשָׂה בְּצִיּוֹן וּמִבְקֵשׁ לָהֶם זְכוּת.

<sup>11</sup> Tanh. f. 30 a, ed. Buber I, p. 115, reads: זְכוּת מִבְקֵשִׁין הֵם שְׁאֵהִיָּה. סוּלַח לָהֶם. The proper reading might have been זְכוּת לָהֶם מִבְקֵשִׁין. שְׁאֵהִיָּה סוּלַח לָהֶם.

<sup>12</sup> b. Taanit 29 a, b. Erachin 11 b, R. Jose b. Sanh. 8 a.

זכות and חובה (גרים) either reward or punishment. R. Simon ben Jochai raises the question as to Deut. 6. 11: Certainly Israel could not fill the houses full of all good things, could not hew the cisterns, could not plant the vineyards, for they never entered the land? What is the meaning of מלאה, חצבת, and נטעת? It teaches that זכות, Israel's merit, brought it about that they were tilled, hewn, and planted at the time when they took possession of the land.<sup>13</sup> The merit causes something which does not happen in ordinary circumstances.<sup>14</sup> Hezekiah says to Isaiah: 'I will marry your daughter, maybe that both my and your merits will ensure it (אפשר דגרמה זכותא) (דירי ודירך), that my children shall be worthy, godfearing people.'<sup>15</sup> The merits of the fathers are supposed to annul the decree which Hezekiah saw by the Holy Spirit that his descendants would be unworthy.<sup>16</sup> The phrase זכר is given Lev. r. 29. 6, Deut. z., p. 2, No. 6. Interesting is the conception which is implied in the composition זכר. Happy is he who performs a commandment, for he inclined (himself) towards the scale of merits, if he transgressed one thing, woe unto him, for he inclines towards the scale of guilt.<sup>17</sup> Or in another passage: 'Even if 999 angels accuse him (מלמדן עליו חובה), and one angel pleads for him (מלמד עליו זכות), God inclines him towards the scale of merits.'<sup>18</sup> The study of the Torah inclines God to judge man according to his meri-

<sup>13</sup> Sifre Deut., § 38, p. 77 ב.

<sup>14</sup> v. however, Friedmann's interpretation note ט"ו.

<sup>15</sup> -b. Ber. 10 a.

<sup>16</sup> Tanh., f. 283 a remarks to Deut. 33. 1, ed. Buber, V, p. 54; Pes., p. 199 ב. מהו את בני ישראל שזכותו של ישראל גרמה לו. The meaning of this sentence is not as Buber (Pes., p. 199 ב note, and Tanh. V, p. 54. note ט"ו) believes, Moses was called 'Man of God' for the merit of Israel, but, analogous to the view of R. Akiba, v. p. 44, for Israel's merit Moses was enabled to bless Israel. We have surely a fragment of a Tannaitic Midrash coming from R. Akiba's school before us which tried to explain the word את.

<sup>17</sup> Tos. Kid., p. 336, l. 24.

<sup>18</sup> j. Pea. 16 ב; j. Kid. 61 ד.

torious side.<sup>19</sup> The term למר זכות is used in Jewish Law (v. M. Synh. IV. 1) as well. As to מצא זכות we refer to Gen. r. 50. 1: the angels waited, perhaps they might find merits for them.<sup>20</sup> He who trusts upon miracles לו מנבין מנבין his merits are being diminished (b. Taan. 20 ב). The merits of the fathers support or help those who work faithfully for the welfare of the congregation.<sup>21</sup> It is identical with עמר.<sup>22</sup> Very frequent is the eleventh composition with תלה.<sup>23</sup>

Older than זכות may be the term מעשה.<sup>23a</sup> R. Eleazar of Modiim speaks of the 'deeds of the fathers', meaning nothing else but the idea of זכות אבות.<sup>24</sup> R. Akiba asked a man: מה מעשים יש בדרך? What works hast thou got, i. e. what merits have you got to escape from sure death in such a miraculous way?<sup>25</sup> R. Matja ben Heresh rules: 'There is no reward without corresponding deed',<sup>26</sup> yet an anonymous teacher states: 'God does mercy with us, even in case we have no works'.<sup>27</sup> The Agadists contrast between the works of the just and those of the wicked. The former bring forth fruits, the latter are fruitless.<sup>28</sup> These righteous were called אנשי מעשה 'men of works'.<sup>29</sup> They were neither Essenes nor any other kind of sectarians,<sup>30</sup> but men like Hanina ben Dosa whose merits were shared by other people. The whole world was created for the

<sup>19</sup> Aboth 6. 6; ומכריעו לבק זכות, v. also 1. 6.

<sup>20</sup> v. further Aboth R. Nathan, p. 107; M. Ct. z., p. 19; Exod. r., ch. 15. 4.

<sup>21</sup> שזכות אבותם מסייעתם Aboth, 2. 2; R. Gamaliel, III, son of R. Judah, I.

<sup>22</sup> v. b. Joma 87 a; Gen. r. 56. 7; Lev. r. 36. 3; Pes. 156 a; M. Ps. 11 d; Exod. r. 33. 3; Tanh., f. 28 ב, ed. Buber, I, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> v. M. Sotah 3. 4; Ber. 10 ב; Joma 87 a; Aboth 5. 18; Gen. r. 49. 25; Ct. r. 4. 3; Eccles. r. 1. 2; Eccles. Z., p. 83; Esther r., ch. 7.

<sup>23a</sup> v. II Baruch 14<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Mech., p. 48 a.

<sup>25</sup> Eccles. r. 11. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Mech., p. 5 a.

<sup>27</sup> Mech. 42 ב.

<sup>28</sup> Sifrē Deut., § 324, v. R. Judah ben Simon, Gen. r., l. 8.

<sup>29</sup> b. Sotah 49 a; b. Succah 51 a, 53 a; Taanith 24 a.

<sup>30</sup> v. however, Jost's *Annalen*, 1839, p. 145; Oppenheim in *MGWJ.*, VII, p. 272; Frankel, *Zeitschrift*, III, p. 458; *MGWJ.*, II, p. 70; Lightfoot J. B., *Dissertations on the Apostolic Age*, London, 1892, p. 330.

merit of such men as Ahab or R. Hanina ben Dosa.<sup>31</sup> All creatures are supplied with food for his sake.<sup>32</sup> It is therefore no wonder that his name is among the אנשי מעשה. Among the Amoraim, R. Hanina ben Hama,<sup>33</sup> R. Joshua ben Levi,<sup>34</sup> and others use מעשה for זכות. This can be observed frequently in the anonymous Agadah. To Gen. 26. 28, ראו ראינו, we read: 'We have seen' thy works and the works of thy fathers.<sup>35</sup> In the Midrash on Psalms it is said: 'A man should not rely upon the works of his fathers.'<sup>36</sup> David says: 'There are some who rely upon their own good deeds, others who trust in the works of their fathers. I, however, call unto Thee, O God.'<sup>37</sup> The word מעשה occurs also in compositions with תלה<sup>38</sup> and זכר,<sup>39</sup> just as זכות.

It seems that in the school of R. Ishmael the term בשכר was used instead of בזכות.<sup>40</sup> In some sources the words בשביל or בצדקה were put in exchange for בזכות. Many examples occur in the following pages.

(3) The Doctrine of Zechuth, signified by various terms, reveals to us one aspect of the relation between God and man. Man has got the ability to acquire merits before his Heavenly Father. However weak and frail man might be physically or morally, he is in a position to gather merits in the eyes of God. What kind of works must he do to acquire merits? There are, of course, many ways and means to give expression to this feeling and sentiment. It is surely superficial to assume that God's relation to

<sup>31</sup> Rab., B. Ber. 61 a.

<sup>32</sup> B. Ber. 17 b.

<sup>33</sup> v. Gen. r. 50. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Exod. r. 44. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Gen. r. 64. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Ed. Prague, p. 68 c; ed. B., p. 534.

<sup>37</sup> M. Psalms, p. 531.

<sup>38</sup> v. Eccles. r. 4. 5.

<sup>39</sup> M. Ct. z., p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> Thus Mech. 8 a: בשכר מצוה שאתם עושים; Mech. 34 a, v. Tanch. f. 81 b: בשכר אמונה; Sifré Deut. § 301: בשכר שלשה; b. Pes. 5 a: בשכר ביאתינו; b. B. M. 86 b: בשכר שלשה; Gen. r. 55. 12, v. Mech. 27 a: בשכר ב' בקיעות; b. Hul. 88 b: בשכר שאמר אברהם. The author's name is רבא, yet style and language suggest that we have, as often, a quotation from an earlier Tannaitic source in the name of a Babylonian teacher of the fourth century before us.

man has no other motive than the observance of the Law on the part of man, and that there is no other form in which God's relation to man appears except in the reward for fulfilling and the punishment for transgressing the Law.<sup>41</sup> It is superficial because the scribes had much higher opinions of the Almighty than to think that He cannot do kindness and show grace for His own sake, for His own name (למען שמו). And it is also misleading, for the Rabbis knew that greater is the grace and salvation which man can enjoy, when done for God's sake than a human being, even the most perfect and just included, may deserve. In the Amidah we read: 'And He brings the Redeemer unto their children's children *for His name's sake* in love' (ומביא גואל לבני בניהם למען שמו). There was a view that God created the world and man for the sake of His name, which was, however, dropped on account of some misrepresentation which it occasioned.

In spite of this we read in an anonymous Agadah: 'You find that God created all things in the six days of creation, He only created them for His glory, and to do His will through them.' There is a detailed support for this view as to the work of each day. I. Heaven and earth were created for His glory according to Isa. 66. 1 and Ps. 19. 2. Light, Ps. 104. 2. II. רקיע (firmament) in order to make a place for the angels, where they can sing His praise, cf. Ps. 150. 1. III. Herbs and trees. Herbs praise God, cf. Ps. 65. 14. Trees, I Chron. 15. 33. The trees are further used in the Law for various purposes. IV. The waters, Ps. 93. 4; sun and moon, Ps. 148. 3. V. The birds. VI. Animals for sacrifices, v. Lev. 1. 14, and man for God's glory, Ps. 148. 8f. That is the meaning of the verse: 'All the works has God made for His own glory (sake), Prov. 16. 4.<sup>42</sup> In the same sense was the passage interpreted by the scribes who lived before the destruction of the Temple.<sup>43</sup> Another Agadist proved the same doctrine from Isa. 43. 7 combined

<sup>41</sup> Weber, *System der altsyn.-paläst. Theologie*, Leipzig, 1880, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> Exod. r. 17. 1.

<sup>43</sup> v. B. Joma 38 a.

with Prov. 16. 4.<sup>44</sup> Targum on Proverbs, however, translates: 'All the works of God are for those who obey Him', which agrees with the Midrash on the Proverbs. For obvious reasons, i. e. that people should not say that God is in need of His creatures' praise, the Targumist and Agadist altered the meaning of the verse in opposition to the accepted view.<sup>45</sup> The penitential prayers start and end with the phrase: 'Do, O God, for the sake of Thy name, &c. Do for your sake if not for our sake. Do for your sake and help us.' II Baruc 21. 21 knew also of this teaching, when he says: 'Because *on account of Thy name* Thou hast called us a beloved people.' Some teachers, who took part in the discussion of the theme, 'for whose merit did Israel cross the Red Sea?' say: 'For His name did He do it with them', as it is said, 'For mine own sake, for mine own sake will I do it' (Isa. 49. 11), and it is written, 'That divided the water before them' (Isa. 63. 12). What for? In order to make himself an everlasting name.<sup>46</sup> We see, therefore, that there were scribes who ascribed some of the great deeds in Jewish history not to individual merits, but held that God had accomplished them for His name's sake. This teaching was adopted and repeated many a time by the teachers of the following century, thus by *R. Isaac* when he says: 'Everybody is in need of God's grace, even Abraham on whose account grace surrounds the whole world.'<sup>47</sup> However great a man may become in justice and righteousness, in knowledge and virtue, he remains in need of mercy and grace, and God does it for His name's sake. *R. Berechiah* puts this conception in the following words: 'Even if the merits of the fathers (חרים) and of the mothers (נבעות) depart or are removed, My kindness shall not depart from thee.'<sup>48</sup> God's grace is greater than the merits of the fathers. He

<sup>44</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 538.

<sup>45</sup> v. also b. Sabb. 116 B.

<sup>46</sup> Mech. 29 B.

<sup>47</sup> Gen. r. 60, 2, *R. Haggai* in his name.

<sup>48</sup> Isa. 54. 10; Lev. r. 36. 5; *R. Judan Bira* in his name, j. Sanh. 27 d; *R. Judan bar Hanan*, v. p. 86.

proves further from several passages in the Books of Psalms that God helped and is about to help Israel, not because Israel has special merits, but in order to make all the nations of the world acknowledge His might and name. The passages are Ps. 67. 3 (That Thy way may be known upon earth), Ps. 76. 2 (In Judah is God known, His name is great in Israel), Ps. 77. 15-16 (Thou hast with Thine arm redeemed Thy people. Thou hast made known Thy strength among the peoples), Ps. 106. 8 (He saved them for His name's sake). Why? To make known the might of God, that He redeems Israel. But the teacher is aware of the possible objection to this view. He raises the question: 'You might think people will say that He shows favour unto them' (i. e. where is God's justice when He redeems the unworthy and helps them?). No, they agree with Him and acknowledge His justice, as it is said: 'Peoples give thanks unto Thee, O God, all of them give thanks unto Thee' (Ps. 67. 6). The same doctrine is corroborated according to R. Berechiah's exegesis and reading of Isa. 61. 11, 62. 1-2.<sup>49</sup> The same opinion is shared by *R. Abun* when he combines Ps. 107. 1 and Deut. 9. 3-5, and makes God speak to Israel thus: 'I did not do (all I have done to you) for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why have I done it? Only for My holy name's sake.'<sup>50</sup> There is a certain unmistakable polemical tendency in a statement taught by *R. Berechiah* in the name of *R. Helbo* in the name of *R. Samuel b. Nahman*. The Jews are to be called "נִצְּלֵי" 'the redeemed of the Lord', likewise by Isaiah 'the ransomed of the Lord', "פְּדוּיֵי" (Isa. 35. 10), but not 'the redeemed or ransomed of Elijah' or 'of the Messiah', but 'of the Lord'.<sup>51</sup> God will ransom Israel neither for the merit of Elijah nor the Messiah, but for His holy name's sake. There are a few statements which

<sup>49</sup> M. Ps., ed. Prague, 34 a; ed. Buber, p. 314. Jalkut has it in the name of R. Berechiah, all the others, v. also Jalkut, *Machiri Ps.*, p. 325, anonymously, v. p. 102.

<sup>50</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 461.

<sup>51</sup> M. Ps., p. 461.

express this idea without giving us the name of the author. First of all the legend, quoted later on (p. 22), where we read that God gives from His unlimited treasures unto those who have gathered no treasures of their own.<sup>52</sup> Further to Ps. 23. 3 (He restoreth my soul) נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָה refers to the future world, He will cause me to return from the exile, not for my merits, but for His name's sake.<sup>53</sup> The teaching of the Mechilta<sup>54</sup> is enlarged and applied also to the future redemption of Israel, in the following words: It does not say 'for My own sake will I do it', but 'for my own sake, for my own sake'. God says: 'I do it only for the sake of My name, in order that My name shall not be profaned.' Why (is it said) twice? 'Just as I redeemed you from Egypt, so will I redeem you from Edom for My name's sake (v. Ps. 108. 8). Just as I redeemed you in this world, so will I redeem you in the world to come for the sake of My name.'<sup>55</sup> We conclude this list of proofs that the idea of God's grace for His name's sake was a reality, with a prayer by *R. Hoshaja* (R. Phinehas b. Hama in his name): 'Our fathers cried unto Thee in Egypt and Thou hast heard their cry, as it is written: "And the Lord went before them at daytime" (Exod. 13. 21); we, however, fasted, afflicted ourselves, we were entreating Thee and prayed day and night and Thou hast not done unto us miracles neither by day nor by night. If there are no good works among us, do it for the holiness of Thy name.'<sup>56</sup> We may surmise that this prayer, which might have been a peroration of some address, was said at a time of great distress, the exact details of which are unknown to us. The teachers of Judaism must have been aware, after all these sayings, that God can do kindness, show love, help and redeem even for His own name's sake.

(4) Yet man has power to acquire merits. The faithful observance of the Law and ceremonies is not unimportant,

<sup>52</sup> Exod. r. 45. 6.

<sup>53</sup> M. Ps. 22 c, ed. B., p. 202, Jellinek ב"ה"ם, V. 163.

<sup>54</sup> p. 29 B.

<sup>55</sup> M. Ps., p. 461.

<sup>56</sup> M. Ps., p. 189.



but by no means the only way to acquire them. There are many other methods of gathering merits. By performing the commandments man is entitled to a reward, by neglecting or transgressing them man is condemned to punishment. The underlying principle of this conception is the old doctrine of reward and punishment. In order to be able to have merits, to get a reward, says *R. Hanania ben Akasia*, God has given unto Israel many laws and commandments.<sup>57</sup> An unknown teacher applied this to Num. 8. 2. God says to Moses: 'Tell Israel, it is not for My need of light that I command you to kindle a light before Me, but in order that you may have merits.'<sup>58</sup> This teaching is repeated by *R. Acha*.<sup>59</sup> The intention of the teachers was to combat two views which were so often pronounced against the Jewish Law. First of all the opinion that the Law and the Ceremonies were a punishment for the stiff-necked people, who had worshipped the golden calf. In consequence of this theory in the observance of these laws and keeping of these Ceremonies there can be no virtue. Secondly, they argued, the observance is senseless, for God does not need them, therefore they are useless and superfluous. Or, as others put it, the Jews have ceremonies and rites which cannot be for the Highest God. The Agadists refuted these arguments by referring to Scripture, which shows that the Laws and Observances

<sup>57</sup> M. Makkot, III, 16.

<sup>58</sup> Tanh. B., IV, p. 46; Num. r. 15. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Lev. r. 31. 7; Isa. 42. 21: א"ר אחא יי חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה; ויאדיר לא בראתי אלא לזכותך, and in another form in Tanh., II B, p. 98: שלא ימעה אותך יצרך לומר צריך הוא אורה, ראה מה כתיב: מחוין לפרכת וגו' לא היתה המנורה צריכה להנחן אלא לפנים מן הפרכת אצל הארון, והיא נתונה מחוין לפרוכת, להודיעך שאינו צריך אורה; אורה, למה אמר לך בשביל לזכותך למאור ואני צריך לאורה משלך אלא; it seems that this was also the meaning of *R. Judah ben Ilai's* sentence: לא אמרתי לך לעולם הבא, which can have no other sense than that by performing the commandments you lay up treasures for the world to come. לא אמרתי in Lev. r. 31. 7 is to be read בראתי.

were given to obtain merits. There is a reward for obedience to the Law.

The theoretical meaning of the Doctrine is expounded by *R. Jannai*. This teacher taught: A man who kindles light in daytime for his friend when it is light, what benefit has he derived? When does he obtain any advantage from light? In case he kindles it in the night-time, in darkness. The affection Israel has shown in the wilderness was kept for them from that time, from the days of Moses. And when was it repaid to them? In the days of Jeremiah, as it is said: 'I remember unto thee the affection of thy youth' (Jer. 2. 2). that is the meaning of the verse: 'O continue Thy lovingkindness (affection) unto them' (Ps. 36. 11).<sup>60</sup> The affection spoken of must be the willing reception of the Law at Sinai. By receiving, with joy and gladness God's Law, the Israelites stored up the merit which was remembered unto them in later times. The period of Israel's journey in the wilderness is remembered here as 'the affection of thy youth', for the sake of their willingness to take upon themselves the yoke of the Torah.

Yet a man who prays and mentions his own merits, or bases his supplication on the many good deeds he has performed, even in case he is heard, it is done not for his sake, but for the merits of others. If, however, he refers in his prayers to the merits of the fathers, and he has merits of his own, then he is heard for his own merits, and the deed is ascribed to him. *R. Jose ben Zimra* illustrates this theory with the case of Hezekiah and Moses. Hezekiah prayed: 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight.' The reply is: 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, &c., for Mine own sake, and for

<sup>60</sup> M. Ps., p. 251 ed. Buber, Mech. 15 B cf. Dio Chrysostomus' saying (Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, IV<sup>3</sup>, p. 818): 'The great ones work for the benefit of others, not for themselves.' M. Ps. P., p. 38 c, אלו צדיקים שמוניהם לבניהם פרי מעשיהם.

My servant David's sake' (2 Kings 20. 3-6). On the other hand Moses cries: 'Remember Abraham, &c.' (Exod. 32. 12), and was heard for his own merits. 'Had not Moses His chosen servant, stood before Him in the breach, to turn back His wrath, lest He should destroy them?'<sup>61</sup> *R. Simon ben Lakish* enlarges our knowledge on this subject a great deal. He understood the meaning of this doctrine somewhat differently from Gfrörer or Weber, and preached accordingly. 'All the blessings of the world, and all the consolations come to the world for the sake of those who pray for others, fast for the success of others, but for themselves have no need whatever.' And *R. Simon ben Lakish* knew such a man, whom he quotes as an instance, i. e. Mar Zutra.<sup>62</sup> Such conduct and action cannot be

<sup>61</sup> Ps. 106. 23, b. Ber. 10 B; *R. Jochanan* in his name, Pes. B. 167 B. *R. Alexander* adds a parable to this teaching: 'Two men gave myrtles to a king. One gave it in his own name, and it "came out" for the name of his grandfather, the other handed it over in his grandfather's name, and it "came out" for his name.' We have here an allusion to an old rite. It is known to all who have studied comparative religious history that the myrtle has a chthonic character, it is holy unto the *χθόνιοι*, v. *Erwin Rohde, Psyche*, 4 ed., p. 220, 2, therefore used at wedding and burial ceremonies, v. *Eugen Fehrle, Die kultische Reinheit im Altertume*, Giessen, 1910, p. 240 f. The two men, whom *R. Alexander* had in mind, gave the myrtles for some magic or religious purpose. In one case, where it was given in the name of the grandfather, the man himself had some advantage, and in the other case the benefit went to the grandfather. That is the meaning of *תנשן*. On the same idea or belief is *R. Levi's* parable based: 'A Matrona brought two myrtles to the king (i. e. when she married). She lost one of them, and was very grieved. The king said: "Keep this one, and I regard it as if you had still both of them"' (Pes. B. 117 B). The myrtle is supposed to have a chthonic power, and the superstitious matrona was afraid she might be lost (and go) to the evil spirits, when defended by one myrtle only. This explains further the curious habit of *R. Judah ben Ilai* and *R. Samuel ben Isaac* who used to dance with three myrtles before the bride. When the latter died, a storm of wind uprooted all the good trees of Palestine. Why? Because he took myrtles from them, and went before the bride. His colleagues, who were unaware of the purpose of his doings, were annoyed, and said: 'Why does he do this? He brings the Torah into contempt.' *R. Zeira* says: 'Leave him, he knows what he does.' When he died a myrtle of fire appeared (Gen. r. 59. 5; B. Ket. 17). We see that the belief existed in Palestine that the myrtles have the power to avert the influence of evil spirits.

<sup>62</sup> v. j. Maaser Sheni 56 d; Frankel, *Mébo Jer.*, p. 77 a. Other types of a

ascribed to the 'native business nature of the Jews'. R. Judan preserved another version of *R. Alexander's*, saying: 'an ox before its sinews are cut through can be hanged on each of its sinews. After they are cut through, however, how many strings and nails are necessary to hang it on? The same happened with Solomon. Before he sinned he could rely on his own merits, after his sin he had to rely on the merits of his fathers.'<sup>63</sup> Before a man sins, his merits are strong, being considered individually, keeping the character of man together; he appears whole and undivided, in perfect harmony. As soon as he sins these merits are cut through. They are broken off, and unable, therefore, to support or hold together the individuality of this man. Sin darkens all one's thoughts and actions. To restore the broken individuality he has to take refuge in the merits of his fathers.

We learn further that even wicked people are not without merits. Esau obtained merits, according to *R. Hama ben Hanina*, by honouring his father. A merit to which the rabbis ascribed Rome's power and strength,<sup>64</sup> for the scribes applied their philosophical theories to the policy of the great world as well. Another heathen, Orpah, was rewarded for the merit acquired by accompanying her mother-in-law, by bringing forth four heroes, according to *R. Levi's* view.<sup>65</sup> We see that even Gentiles can have merits. *Simon ben Pazzi* warns people who accomplish good deeds, and claim their reward at once. Had the ancestors taken the reward of the smallest מצוה they did in this world, whence could their merit have come for their children, even for us? A man who does not do like the forefathers did is like a porter who says: 'There is the sack, the money, and measure, go and take.'<sup>66</sup> The same view was taught by *R. Phinehas b. Hama*. We gather that

similar character were R. Hanina b. Dosa, R. Simon ben Jochai, Hijja and his sons, and R. Joshua ben Levi.

<sup>63</sup> Eccles. r. 1. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Gen. r. 66. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Tanh. B. I, p. 208; M. Ruth r. 2. 20; R. Judan in the name of *R. Isaac*.

<sup>66</sup> j. Sanh. 27 d; Lev. r. 36. 3.

merits are to be obtained by not using the rewards we are entitled to claim in this world. We learn, therefore, (1) God has given the Law to enable man to obtain merits; (2) by not using the reward which is due to him who observes the Law, they are preserved for the later generations; (3) Jews and Gentiles are alike in acquiring merits for goods deeds.

We have to mention finally two passages which throw further light on the theory of the doctrine. The Rabbis (colleagues of R. Levi) say: Abraham was afraid, and said: 'I escaped the fiery furnace, I escaped from battle, perhaps I received my reward in this world, and there is nothing left for me in the world to come.' God says: 'Do not be afraid. What I have done to thee is all for nothing, thy reward is kept for the next world.'<sup>67</sup> Another case is that of Jacob. *R. Jannai* derived this theory from Gen. 32. 11 that a man should not stand on a dangerous place, and trust in a miracle, because if he should escape he diminishes his merits.<sup>68</sup> Both instances show the Rabbis' view that we might use up the merits in this world which ought to be stored up for the world to come. This leads us to the conceptions of the heavenly treasures.

(5) 'He who works righteousness upon the earth has a treasure in heaven'<sup>69</sup> is an often-repeated teaching in the Apocrypha and Pseud-epigrapha. II Baruch reports that there are in heaven gathered the treasures of all those who have been righteous in creation (24. 7); further, that the pious have with God a store of works preserved in treasuries (44. 12). And the Gospels preach: 'Lay not up for yourselves *treasures upon earth* where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves *treasures in heaven*, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal' (Matt. 6. 19-20). It was assumed that the doctrine of the treasuries, where the good

<sup>67</sup> Gen. r. 44. 5.

<sup>68</sup> v. b. Sabb 32 B.

<sup>69</sup> Test. Lev. 13. 5; Test. Napht. 8. 5.

deeds of the pious were stored up, and used for the atonement for sins and for averting punishment of other people, developed in Judaism through Persian influence and example.<sup>70</sup> However that may be, we see the first part of the Doctrine in the Apocrypha and Gospels. No trace of the second part is to be seen. It is worth while investigating how far this doctrine penetrated into Rabbinical Judaism. Charity is a treasure, as we find it in the story of Monobazus. This king distributed among the poor his property in years of famine. His brother reproached him, saying: 'Your fathers gathered treasures, and increased their fathers' treasures, and you distribute among the poor your and your fathers' treasures.' He said: 'My fathers stored up treasures on earth below, I store them up in heaven above! They stored up treasures in a place, *whence they can be taken away*, I do so where *they cannot be taken away*.'<sup>71</sup> They stored up treasures which can bring no fruits, mine shall bear fruits; they did it for this world, I do it for the future world.'<sup>72</sup> This conception differs from the view of R. Simon ben Jochai, according to whom there is only one treasury, i. e. of those who fear sin. It seems, however, that his colleague, R. Jose ben Halafta, had a wider outlook, more in agreement with that of Monobazus. Likewise did R. Nehemia teach that all the souls of the righteous are gathered in the Heavenly treasury. Bar Kappara also testifies that R. Simon ben Jochai's doctrine has not enjoyed much popularity. Of the Agadists of the Amoraic period only R. Abba b. Kahana refers to this teaching.<sup>73</sup>

An anonymous teacher expresses the views held about this doctrine by means of the following legend: Moses ascends to heaven, and God shows him all the heavenly

<sup>70</sup> v. Spiegel, *Eranische Allertumskunde*, II, p. 64 f.; *ZfWTh.*, 27. 356.

<sup>71</sup> v. my article, 'The Treasures in Heaven and upon Earth,' in the *London Quarterly Review*, 1919, pp. 216-28.

<sup>72</sup> Tosefta Pea, p. 24, l. 11; pal. Pea, 15 B, b. B. B., 11 a; Pes. r., p. 126 B.

<sup>73</sup> s., pp. 54 and 91.

treasures. Moses inquires: 'For whom is this?' God replies: 'For those who observe the Law.' Moses: 'To whom is this treasure due?' God: 'To him who brings up orphans.' Moses passes from each treasury to the other, and learns the merits for which they are kept. Then Moses sees a big treasury, larger than all the others, and asks: 'For whom, O Lord, is that?' God replies: 'He who has (merits) I give him his reward from his own; to him, however, who has nothing, no merit at all, will be given hence.'<sup>74</sup> From all these passages we learn that the belief existed of the treasures of good deeds and performances gathered for the benefit of him who actually did them. There is no reference to posterity or others. Every one's merits are rewarded, he who has no merits receives for God's sake.

On this conception is also based the teaching that each Jew has a share in the future life, in the world to come. The teachers of the Mishnah derived it from or supported it with the words of Isa. 60. 21.<sup>75</sup> The exception enumerated in the same Mishnah shows clearly that a good many Jews were not found worthy of this share owing to dogmatic reasons. Older and younger scribes enlarged this catalogue of unworthies and supplemented the list by adding occasionally some transgressions which may deprive people of this privilege. These negations have an historical ground, which must be investigated individually and cannot be dealt with summarily. The scribes are, however, reticent as to the positive side of the doctrine. They never dared to state plainly whether this or that person is a son of the future world. Even men of great merits trembled at the thought whether their share in the future life was assured or not. Yet there are cases where people were assigned as 'sons of the world' to come, of whom none would have thought or imagined that such an honour was

<sup>74</sup> Exod. r. 45. 6, v. אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים, p. 51; Tanh. f. 127, a fuller description in the Hebrew *Ascensio Mosi* (גְּדוּלַת מֹשֶׁה).

<sup>75</sup> M. Sanh. X. 1.

theirs, a fact which shows that not so much the open merits counted in the eyes of those initiated, but just the secret virtues and merits hidden to the sight of men, but revealed to Him who sees everything. Not only Jews, but pious heathens too, have a share in the future life.<sup>76</sup> IV Ezra denies this share to heathens in general (13. 25), yet Baruch (72. 2) grants it to pious heathens, just as R. Joshua ben Hananiah did.<sup>77</sup> R. Meir's friend enlightens us on this subject, when he says: 'This world belongs to us (heathens), the world to come to you (Jews).'<sup>78</sup> We know from Plato's *Republic* (II. 364) that already in his days there were in Greece many begging charlatans, called *orpheo-telestae*, whose business it was to knock at the doors of the rich, with a heap of pamphlets under their arms, supposed to have been written by Orpheus himself, out of which they promised, in exchange for good money, to perform some rites which, so they affirmed, or pretended—and as a testimony of human cleverness found believers—could purify and remove from those, who could afford to pay, all traces of defilement and guilt, and assure them a happy lot in the world to come.<sup>79</sup> The desire for a happy lot in the future life existed in the heathen world later on too, except in such circles to which R. Meir's friend belonged, who may have been an adherent of Epicurus. A pious Stoic was perhaps more anxious about his future happiness. The teachers of Judaism, like R. Joshua ben Hananiah, must have achieved many successes in these circles, at least with wise men and wearied politicians or soldiers who cared for their share in the future life. The preachers of the Gospels had also not too difficult a task with people who were anxious for their future life. This broad view is mere theory. Actual life teaches differently. Churches and denominations, ambitions and policies, are

<sup>76</sup> v. p. 40, n. 10.

<sup>77</sup> v. F. Rosenthal, *Vier apokryphische Bücher aus der Schule R. Akiba's*, Leipzig, 1885, p. 83.

<sup>78</sup> v. p. 51, n. 48.

<sup>79</sup> v. Döllinger, *Heidenthum und Judenthum*, Regensburg, 1857, p. 138.



busy nullifying R. Joshua ben Hananiah's great teaching that ultimately everything depends on piety and love of God, in whatever form this appears. Among Jews themselves there were *three* groups, often differentiated in the sources: righteous, men of the middle way, and wicked.

(6) Of the four aspects on which the doctrine of merits throws light, we deal firstly with the theological part. God is, according to Rabbinical theology, all-mighty, all-powerful. None can prevent Him from, and none can help Him in doing, anything. That being so, what was the aim of the Creation? Why does this Universe exist? Why has He shown His great miracles and wonders in the course of Jewish history? Why was Israel chosen? There are two trends of theological speculation endeavouring to satisfy people's curiosity. One school inclined to the opinion that 'everything is done for His Name's sake'. Even the greatest personality does not come near the ideal, or the best deeds are not sufficient recompense for God's mercy shown in nature and history, in the past as well as in the present time. The second set has the general tendency towards the opinion that nothing is caused but for merits. Approval and criticism can be equally divided between both schools. If God created the Universe for His own glory, if He keeps the world going, does miracles, &c., for His Name's sake, then He is in need of them, to make known His name, and to be glorified. God is, however, without needs and requirements. He who is all-mighty needs nothing. Yet the attempt of this school was to show that the fundamental character of Deity is mercy and goodness. A human being or action cannot be so great, so unselfish to deserve the revelations of God in life and death by his own accomplishments. The second school had a better opinion of man's value. We can acquire merits, we can reach a height of perfection which makes us worthy that a world shall be created for our sake, yet could not God bestow upon us His mercy without our work? This school replied to the theorists: 'Without Faith,

Work, or Love nothing could come about, for it would not be just, and God is just.' We see, therefore, the basis of these various views is interwoven with the chief problems of Jewish theology especially, and religious thought generally, namely, the nature (or attributes) of God (powerful, good, just) and the Government of God. The later Agadists must have come to a compromise, which enabled them to combine both views. In this sense only are we justified in speaking of merits in Rabbinical theology.

This appears even more strikingly in the differences which can be discerned as to the merits themselves. Whilst the great bulk of Agadists accept the doctrine of merits unconditionally, they recognize only the value of self-acquired merits, and would not admit the help or influence of imputed merits. It is, according to their teachings, quite in order that nothing should happen without merits, yet we have to obtain our own merits. This does not mean egotism or selfishness, but justice. Yet life contradicts this theory everywhere and in every way. This way of thinking is too severe, and does not appeal to the masses. Therefore, we observe that the second school which taught and spread the doctrine of the merits of the fathers and of the righteous enjoyed much greater popularity. To trust in the merits of others is more convenient, especially where and when moral qualities are considered. The abuses and misinterpretations which the teaching might lead to were obvious. A compromise was wanted, and was actually found as early as in the time of Hillel, and carried on by his school. In the later Agadah again the traces of these differences were lost and the views assimilated with each other. It is to be noted, however, that the fathers or the righteous stand as representatives of ideals in a good many cases. They personify the great moral teachings for which Judaism lives.

There seems to be no dispute on the doctrine of imputed sins. This was recognized generally. The ancient commentators of the Decalogue smoothed over the difficulty

arising out of this teaching by assuming that only those children suffer for their fathers' sins who follow their wicked fathers' footsteps.<sup>80</sup> The Agadists, however, take this view for granted. Children suffer for the shortcomings of their parents, and *vice versa*, just as in the case of merits. Although one might be tempted to question the justice of the children's suffering for the parents' sake, as one does it in the analogous doctrine of merits, yet no dispute arose. The reason may be found in the fact that the truth of the fact is verified by daily experience, and secondly the adoption of this view was less exposed to misconstruction and harm than the other.

The merits are manifold. They are based on the principles of Faith, Works, and Love. The doctrine of merit teaches, in common with the history of all ethical sentiments, that simple ethical notions develop into general conceptions. They originally impersonate personalities and events, who are the bearers of ethical ideas. The fathers, the pious, the various biblical personages, whose merits are spoken of, represent faithfulness, adherence to God's word and obedience to His command, lovingkindness and self-sacrifice, unselfishness and love. Speaking, therefore, of the merits of these personalities means, if we divest them of their names, idealizing the general notions of the different merits. Rabbinical theology is generally reproached as preferring works to faith and love. One is apt, however, to forget that these works, whether prayers or charity, Sabbath or circumcision, sacrifices or tithes, were never regarded as forms of words or forms of ceremony. They had, and have even now, a meaning which is alive in them. They certainly were not looked upon in themselves as possessing material or magical virtues. Besides Judaism, firm on these ideals, stood the acid test of history in very trying and dangerous moments. Any form of religion which justifies man by faith and love alone, without works, could not, as far as history teaches

<sup>80</sup> b. Ber 7 a, Mech. 49 a.

throughout the ages, withstand the enticing voice of selfishness and infidelity.

The development of this doctrine gives an illustration of the Agadic method. In more than one instance we can discern the influence of contemporary events, of actual life, of historical causes upon the teachings of the Agadists. It cannot be merely a chance when the rabbis of the third century changed suddenly their attitude by preaching: 'For Israel's sake was the world created, for Israel's sake does the world exist, for Israel's sake all blessing comes into the world', instead of the older view, 'For man's sake was the world created.' This was certainly neither chauvinism nor self-conceit on the part of the Rabbis. Its development is closely connected with the polemics of those days. The church and the porch, the cathedral and the temple revived the half-forgotten and totally ill-founded abuses against the Jews. The Jews are a useless nation, which had done nothing for the good of humanity.<sup>81</sup> The Jews, so the Agadists replied to the Church, are something more than witnesses of the veracity of the Church; they are the source of every blessing and happiness. How far this is true or false cannot be our task to investigate here, yet it is in any case nearer to the truth than the conception of the Church Fathers. The same apologetical tendency can be discovered in the teaching that for the sake of the pious women in Egypt Israel was redeemed. The accusations are well known, and it is worthless even to repeat them. The Agadists cannot be blamed when they availed themselves of this doctrine to repulse one of the most hideous and cruel misrepresentations of Jewish history. Other apologetical traces are shown in the doctrine of the merits of the fathers. From the writer of the Barnabas letter onwards, the story of the golden calf figures as a striking proof for Israel being forsaken by God. The Agadists retort that God has forgiven Israel for the merits of the

<sup>81</sup> Apolonios Molon, Josephus, *c. Ap.* 2. 14; Apion, *ibid.* 2. 12; Celsus, *c. Cels.* 4. 31; Julianus, p. 208 seq., 222 H.

fathers. That teaching gave rise to the problem as to how long did the merits of the fathers influence the fate of Israel? Why did they not protect Israel in fateful hours and crises? Another, more internal, event occasioned the argument: 'Why do the just men perish in time of plague? Why cannot their merits protect others as well as themselves?' On this basis they developed the doctrine of imputed sins and imputed righteousness of the just. Sometimes the latter dies for the sins of others, at other times the death of the righteous prevents death or plague, which threatens the whole community. In the homilies of the scribes this aspect was forcefully emphasized to warn against wickedness and to animate the hearers, to imitate the deeds of righteous men and women.

It is a general and a great mistake to criticize and pass any opinion on the Agadah without considering the cultural movements and philosophical streams in the environment of the authors. The fundamental basis of our doctrine finds its counterpart in Stoic thoughts. The contemporary Stoics, whose philosophy bears a theological and ethical aspect, were agitated by the same problems as the rabbis: There must be some aim in the creation of the universe! They taught further that the world will not exist for ever. Any moment a great cataclysm may arise which will shake the whole world to its foundations, and destroy it. Only some merit keeps it together. Some deeper cause prevents this threatening event being realized. It was a teacher of the Stoa, who finally made the western world acquainted with the doctrine that the descendants enjoy the good works of their parents, just as the latter benefit by the deeds of the children. Still the law of imputed sin is one of the features of old Greek religion, as described in the Homeric works and the Attic drama. Troy and her inhabitants suffer for Paris' sin.<sup>81a</sup> It may be that the position of the ruler was so high that the punishment must be

<sup>81a</sup> v. also John 9. 2: Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

general, or that the conception is based on the idea of solidarity. The same occurs in the case of Niobe.<sup>82</sup> Yet the doctrine of imputed righteousness was never thought of before Judaism proclaimed it. The relation between the Stoa and Agadah appears not merely in this doctrine. There are besides this point many other problems which would tempt us to lay our material before the readers. Such an investigation is needed in spite of the attempts made by various students.<sup>83</sup> Space does not permit such an excursion. Yet it is more than probable according to our impression that the Stoics, especially those who hailed from the Orient or lived in Semitic environment,<sup>84</sup> adopted the greater part of their theological teachings from the Jews, and adapted them to their own system. However that may be, one fact is certain, that the speculations on the accumulation of merits were on the order of the day in the schools in the Orient as well as in the Occident in those days.

In other philosophical systems there are also some parallels to our doctrine. The Buddhist systems taught that people can acquire by asceticism such powers, and accumulate such great merits that the gods have to obey their wishes;<sup>85</sup> their merits are available for others.<sup>86</sup> One can transfer the accumulated merits from the living to the dead. This is also proclaimed by the Sayash la Sayash, which lays also great stress on the merit of repentance (VIII, 5-9). The wicked receive their reward for their good deeds.<sup>87</sup> Without great difficulty one can gather many parallels between the Jewish doctrine and various

<sup>82</sup> v. especially W. Wundt, *Ethik*, I, p. 93.

<sup>83</sup> v. esp. A. Bodek, *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus und Rabbi*, Leipzig, 1868, pp. 121-32, 141; Bergmann, *Judaica, Festschrift zu Hermann Cohen's 70. Geburtstag*, Berlin, 1912, pp. 145-66; v. also Frankel, *MGWJ.*, 8. (1859), p. 399 f.

<sup>84</sup> v. Lightfoot J. B., *Apostolic Age*, p. 282 ff.

<sup>85</sup> *Mahab.*, III, 122-5, *Visnu Purana*, I, 9.

<sup>86</sup> v. *JRAS.*, 1875, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> v. M. N. Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, New York, 1914, pp. 56 f, 273-5.

religious systems; the material at our disposal shows, however, that the importance of the doctrine does not concentrate in its historical aspect, but in its ethical value.

The question of the origin of this doctrine leads to negative results. Thinkers of many races and nations, engaged in studying ethical problems, came to the result—whether independently or not is a difficult, but irrelevant question—that there is imputed righteousness as well as imputed sin. The latter conception is older and wider, the former reveals a higher development of ethical thought. The objections to the ethical value of the merits are three-fold: (a) they show a mercenary spirit; (b) they lead to a craving after merits; and (c) they promote self-righteousness. The history of our doctrine teaches us that none of these dangers were overlooked, and none of them darkened the brighter side of this conception. There may or may not have been people who kept books of their righteous works and good deeds. Yet the scribes warned them and condemned their point of view! Besides, there can be no mercenary spirit when the benefit or advantage arising out of the merits and rewards cannot be enjoyed in this world, but in a world to come—which itself is a matter of faith and belief. Supposing some one reached such a high standard of thought that he sees in his devotion to study, in performing the observances, in giving charity, an instrument to gather treasures for a future life, is that a mercenary spirit? Is it not rather the strongest faith one can imagine? It cannot be denied that Jews were yearning to perform the commandments. Well, Moses desired, according to the Agadic world-view, to enter the Holy Land, because there were some observances which were meaningless and valueless outside that country (b. Sotah 14 a R. Simlai). They were craving not after rewards, but their desire was to give worthy expression to that deep, immeasurable love and unlimited faith in the Father in Heaven. They saw in their works the means to bear witness to the existence of God, to recognize His rule and providence, to acknow-

ledge gratefully His mercy in hours of success, and bow their head in sorrow with eyes turned to heaven in face of His chastisement. How far all this promoted self-righteousness it is impossible to see. The man who really obtained merits, or who was keen to accumulate them, did not do so for himself, but without his being aware of it, the merits benefited others. For the idea of merits in Judaism is something quite different from that in the Catholic Church. There a man gets merit who does something more or less than others do. He avoids things which God in His indulgence has not strictly forbidden. In Judaism, however, every one can get merits, not by negative, but by *positive* works. צְדָקָה is really neither Arete, Virtus, nor Tugend. These words signify some ideal which makes life appear good and desirable to the Greek, Roman, and Germanic races. They lay stress on external matters, like ability in society, military or forensic achievements, utility in art and craft. The Jews' ideal was to appear 'pure', 'undefiled' before the Creator. Thus he never approached the line of self-righteousness. Can one born of woman be pure before his Creator? The best example is that sage who spent his whole life in study and charitable work, and when he heard the news of his imminent martyr death, asked: 'Have I got a share in the future life?' Where is there self-righteousness here? We find further cases when the Rabbis were informed, by a way which it is not our duty to search here, of people whom every one regarded as wicked, unworthy, e. g. the Pentakaka, having supernatural powers. Do these examples leave any room for self-righteousness? Certainly not. It is also useless from the Rabbinical point of view to enter into discussion whether merits are rivals of duties,<sup>88</sup> or to distinguish between meritorious and autonomous works, for duty and merits are really the same. By doing our duty we acquire merits. We, of course, can object and say that discharging one's duty

<sup>88</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Fehrbach, pp. 103 ff., 186 ff.



cannot be a merit from the ethical point of view. Why, then, did the scribes regard the observance of the Law, which was the Jews' most sacred duty, as a merit? Yet it seems that only the performance of those was considered as meritorious in which the devotion to the faith in God and lovingkindness found noble expression.

There are two other objections to Jewish ethics generally, and to our doctrine especially, which have to be pointed out here. First of all the reproach that the ethics of the Rabbis are materialistic, in so far that the terminology reminds us of legal aspects (for instance זכות למד or is caught in sensual phrases, like הכריע זכיותי. Yet it should not be forgotten that זכה is used in the Bible originally in a more theological or ritualistic sense. We observe further that in the whole discipline of ethics words applied to worldly matters are used in speaking of moral actions and ethical sentiments.<sup>89</sup> The second fault may be found in the egotism, from which all eschatological conceptions suffer more or less. The latter are based on future advantages. The rabbis, besides, exhausted the pedagogical value which surrounds the agadic biographies of biblical personages. Yet we cannot speak in this connexion of having applied immoral motives for moral aims,<sup>90</sup> because the motives themselves are by no means immoral, indeed the reverse, because based on the highest ideals of morality.

Finally, we have to point out the influence of the doctrine on social life. In every form of social life merits and demerits count; the former entitle us to esteem, praise, and approbation; the latter render us unworthy of these qualities, and make us worthy of reproach and blame. The merits are, however, dependent on the general moral or ethical sentiments of the various social grades of different nations. Health of body, fortitude in war, skill in the forum, beauty of appearance, were all merits which may be beneficial to the individual. We speak, however,

<sup>89</sup> v. Wundt, *Ethik*, I, p. 29.

<sup>90</sup> v. Wundt, *l. c.* I, p. 100.

of merits by which the welfare of mankind, of a whole community, of whole nations is promoted or secured, or of demerits by which the fortune of future generations is threatened. Such merits or demerits must be recognized or blamed, revered or condemned. It is only natural that those whose merits helped or were supposed to have helped their contemporaries were in a somewhat exceptional position in the community. Thus first of all the scribes who were engaged in the study of Torah, who endeavoured to raise the intellectual standard, to spread the word of God by teaching and learning ; who comforted the mourning and led the stumbling, by preaching and warning ; who encouraged their brethren or compatriots in distress and sorrow by unrolling before their eyes the glorious vision of Israel's eternity. There was no field of human activity or no branch of religious life where their benevolent and unintrusive help was not wanted or their advice and impartial judgement sought for in vain. Such men surely deserved some signs of respect or reverence, recognition or support for their merits. Even their children shared the latter to a certain extent. Then we find that the rabbis had to be lenient with people of great merits, as, e. g., in the case of Honi ha Meagal, or Theodosius of Rome.<sup>90a</sup> The strict law had to stand still in face of great merits. These were, however, neither merits of birth, nor merits of material wealth, but simply merits of works for the community. However great the esteem of people with merits was, it was not of a material form. They had some social privileges, but only on the fields they worked. No economic advantages could be derived from them. Only in exceptional cases do we find that the lack of Zechut Aboth influenced the career of a great man. If a suggestion advanced by an Amora is correct and reliable, there was on the one side the merit of wealth which was responsible for R. Eleazar ben Azaria's election to the dignity of the

<sup>90a</sup> b. Ber. 19a ; b. Pesah. 53a.

Patriarchate, and the lack of Zechut Aboth caused the defeat of R. Akiba in his nomination as R. Gamaliel II's temporary successor. This might also account for the legend that R. Meir, who was not liked by the intimates of the Patriarchal camarilla, was the descendant of the Emperor Nero. The problem of the merits of the proselytes has surely a social reason. It is to be noticed that in times of moral decline in Jewish history, antagonists, who by their spiritual value and moral light overwhelmed petty and selfish accusers, were abused or suspected as being of proselyte origin. Yet we find that the boasting of great ancestry, of noble birth, without one's own merits, was unpalatable to Jewish teachers.

The problem whether long life, children, and worldly wealth were an outcome of man's merits was discussed by the Alexandrinians and R. Joshua ben Hananiah.<sup>91</sup> The sage thought first that all these blessings depend on the merits of works. The sharp Alexandrians gave him, however, many instances which proved that even people with great merits died in their youth, or had no children and remained poor all their life. The scribe had to admit this, and gave them the advice to seek God's mercy. Some find this idea, that one's merits have no influence on his being rich or poor, in a saying of R. Meir.<sup>92</sup> The view is shared by R. Eleazar ben Pedath,<sup>93</sup> and expressed by the Babylonian Amora Raba (רבא): 'Life, children, and food do not depend on merits but on the influence of the planets.'<sup>94</sup> The fact that one dies early in life or in old age, childless or blessed with children, poor or rich, proves nothing as to one's merits, for the merits one accumulates are not rewarded in this world but in the world to come.

Quite different is the case of the demerits or sins. Their influence is felt in this world. One is disgraced and blamed for them in life. If one escaped them, then his

<sup>91</sup> b. Niddah 170 B.

<sup>92</sup> b. Kid. 82 a (v. p. 49), and Barzilai's *Commentary to Sefer Yetzira*, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> v. b. Ber. 5 B.

<sup>94</sup> b. M. K. 28 a.

descendants or family will have to suffer for it. Even strangers have to suffer for the sins of their wicked contemporaries. The righteous is taken away for the sin of his generation. This is the result, as will be shown, of the law of solidarity which was enunciated by the Jewish teachers. Thanks to Stoic philosophy a loftier conception of cosmopolitan teaching obtained among the intellectuals of the ancient world, and brought home to them the teaching that we are all members of one vast body. They made the soil, barren for so many ages, the heart, dried up by the tempest of selfishness, acceptable for an even higher teaching that all human beings, without difference of creed and nationality, race or position, are created in the image of God (R. Akiba, Aboth, IV. 15). There can be no other goal for life and history than the translation of this ideal of the solidarity of mankind into fact and reality.

The social aspect of this doctrine appears, finally, in the merits attributed to Jewish women. We will show later on that the view is primarily of apologetical provenance. This cannot prevent us deriving some truth and information as to the social position of women in those days. It must have been very high indeed, if the teachers and preachers could exclaim in their sermons and lectures: 'The merit of pious women delivered us from Egypt.' In this saying there is certainly more than a dry lifeless hypothesis of historical speculation. It teaches first of all that those scribes were perfectly aware and conscious of the self-sacrifice and motherly love with which noble womanhood watched their children's steps from their early youth, and, secondly, they knew and impressed their audience with that very same knowledge, which is verified by history and life, that the future, the existence of a religious community as well as of a nation, has its roots in family life, in the character of women. They have the privilege, but at the same time the higher duty, of working for the salvation of the world.

To these by no means exhaustive aspects of the doctrine

of merits—some aspects will occur naturally in the course of the following pages—may be added a short bibliography of this subject. The doctrine of merits has been often dealt with and referred to in the last decades. Besides *Güdemann*<sup>95</sup> and *Kohler*,<sup>96</sup> we have essays treating on this question by *S. Levy*<sup>97</sup> and *Schechter*<sup>98</sup> and *Wohlgemuth*.<sup>99</sup> A new treatment of the doctrine seemed to us not out of place, for these essays aimed mostly at one side, one aspect of the question, the biblical origin or the liturgical value, or at the merits of the fathers. We considered mainly the historical development of the teaching. It is very convenient, in speaking of Jewish theology, to stigmatize any attempt to show the historical development of its problems as ‘weaving ropes of sand’ or ‘building palaces out of sunbeams’. The task has, however, to be undertaken.

<sup>95</sup> Rahmer's *Jüd. Literaturblatt*, XXI (1890), No. 18; *Jüd. Apologetik*, Glogau, 1906, p. 171 f.

<sup>96</sup> *Grundriss einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*, Leipzig, 1910, p. 310.

<sup>97</sup> *Original Virtue and other short Studies*, London, 1907, p. 1-42.

<sup>98</sup> *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, 1909, pp. 170-98.

<sup>99</sup> In *Festschrift zum 40jährigen Amtsjubiläum des Dr. S. Carlebach*, Berlin, 1910, pp. 98-145; v. also Ephraim Frisch, *Zechuth Aboth and the Akedah*, in the Hebrew Union College Annual, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1904, pp. 253-66; R. Travers Herford, B.A., *Pharisaism*, London, 1912, p. 213 f. and p. 276 f.; and Gfrörer, F. A., *Das Jahrhundert des Heils*, Stuttgart, 1838, pp. 134-94.

## I.

(1) *Shemaiah and Abtaljon*, or Sameas and Pollion as called by Josephus,<sup>1</sup> were the first to discuss a question bearing on the subject of merits in Rabbinical literature. The problem which agitated the mind of these two 'great men of their generation'<sup>2</sup> was: 'What merit did the Israelites possess that God divided the sea before them?' Such a supernatural deed must have been caused or brought about by some special merits. Shemaiah taught: 'Sufficient is the *faith*, with which Abraham their father believed in Me that I should divide the sea before them, as it is said: And He believed in God, and He counted it unto him (i. e. at the sea) for (doing) charity (with his children)' (Gen. 15. 6). Abtaljon says: 'Worthy is the faith, they (the Israelites themselves) believed in Me so that I shall divide the sea before them, as it is said: "And the people believed"' (Exod. 4. 31).<sup>3</sup> It is rather significant that at the head of an historical review of one of the important doctrines of the scribes, we do not find works and ceremonies emphasized, but the merit of faith, not an external deed, but an innermost feeling, is demanded. Not 'opera operata', but faith it was which produced an event which seemed to the ancients one of the great miracles of Israel's

<sup>1</sup> Ant. XIV, 9. 4; XV, 1. 1; 10. 4. v. D. Hoffmann, *Der oberste Gerichtshof*, pp. 43, 45; Büchler, *Das Synhedrion in Jerusalem*, p. 179 f.

<sup>2</sup> גדולי הדור b. Pes. 66 a; j. Pes. 33 a; גדולי עולם.

<sup>3</sup> Mech., p. 29 B: כדאי היא האמונה שהאמין בי אברהם אביהם שאקדע להם להם את הים, אבטליון אומר כדאי היא האמונה שהאמינו בי שאקדע להם את הים, v. Mech. of R. Simon ben Jochai, p. 48, where a fuller version of the latter opinion is ascribed to the Rabbis generally. According to this view the choice of Israel as God's chosen people is to be ascribed to Israel's faith in God; v. also J. Oppenheim, *האסיף*, VI (1894), p. 95.

past. The dispute between the two scribes deals with a side issue, whether the faith of Abraham or their own faith made the Israelites worthy to experience and ask: 'What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest?' Their pupil and successor Hillel left us an epigrammatic saying which gave rise to various explanations; one at least calls for our attention. 'If I am not for myself, who is then for me? And if I am for myself, what am I?'<sup>4</sup> *Aboth of R. Nathan* explains this in the following words: 'If I do not acquire merits in this world, who will justify me in the world to come? There I have neither father nor brother. Our father Abraham could not ransom his son Ishmael. Our father Isaac could not redeem Esau. Even if they give all their Mammon they cannot ransom themselves. Whence do we know that brothers cannot redeem their brethren? Jacob could not redeem his brother Esau' (cf. Ps. 49. 8, 10).<sup>5</sup> Hillel's word may have been a warning, if he really meant it in this sense to those who misunderstood or misused the meaning of the teaching of merit. He turned perhaps against those who thought and said within themselves: '*We have Abraham to our father*'<sup>6</sup> in spite of whatever we may do or think.' Our forefathers cannot justify us in judgement, we ourselves have to abide by our deeds and consequences. Hillel would, in that case, have continued the teaching of his master Abtaljon, who pointed out against Shemaiah that individual merits helped Israel at the sea. In the second part of the saying we have a compromise. 'When I am for myself what am I?' i. e. what can man achieve? Even if we acquired merits, we still have no right to claim reward. All the good deeds a man does in this world are not sufficient to justify him. He has to rely on the works of the fathers. Thus or similarly sounded Hillel's teaching, if the pretty late interpretation understood it rightly. There is no cogent reason to doubt

<sup>4</sup> *Aboth*, I, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Schechter, p. 54, II version, I version much shorter.

<sup>6</sup> *Matt.* 3. 9; *John* 8. 39.

that, moreover, the views of Shemaiah and Abtaljon explain Hillel's saying in this sense and support such an interpretation. We find a striking parallel to this view of Shemaiah and Abtaljon in Luke 17. 5 f., where the apostles ask of Jesus: 'Increase our faith!' And Jesus said, if ye had *faith* as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree (*τῇ συκαμίνῳ*): Be thou plucked up by the root, *and be thou planted in the sea*; and it should obey you.<sup>7</sup> If a faith as minute as a grain of mustard seed were sufficient to accomplish such miracles, the faith of Abraham or of Israel was surely sufficient to enable Israel to cross the sea.

It is doubtful whether the dialogue between the conqueror of Jerusalem, called Hadrian, and R. Jochanan ben Zakkai is genuine as related in Tanh. Buber, V, p. 6. Hadrian was proud, and boasted everywhere: 'I conquered Jerusalem with (my) power!' R. Jochanan ben Zakkai said to him: 'Do not boast, were it not from heaven (i. e. God's will) thou wouldst not have conquered it.' What did R. Jochanan ben Zakkai do? He took Hadrian and led him to a cave and showed him the Amorites buried there, and one of them was eighteen cubits in length. I said to him: 'When we had merits, even these fell into our hands, and now that by reason of our sins, even thou can'st rule over us.'<sup>8</sup>

Of the contemporaries and pupils of R. Jochanan ben Zakkai we mention *R. Eleazar ben Zadok* first. He said to his father R. Zadok, who was healed by heathen physicians sent by the Roman Government at the request of R. Jochanan ben Zakkai: 'Father, give them their reward in this world, so that they have no reward through thee in the world to come.'<sup>9</sup> Even heathens,

<sup>7</sup> v. Matt. 17. 20; 21. 21; Mark 11. 23.

<sup>8</sup> v. also the observations of Abba Saul on the fossil bones, b. Niddah 24 b. It is to be observed that the rhetors of the second and third century c. e. liked to refer to these fossil bones, so that the crowd should be attracted by the old hero worship, v. F. Kuhn, *Philostat und Dyktys*, Hermes, 1917 (52), p. 614.

<sup>9</sup> Lam. r. I, 5, ed. Buber, p. 68; v. also Ps. Jon. Targ. Dt. 7. 10.



who do good deeds, have merits, which, however, are recompensed in this world. *R. Joshua ben Hananiah* held that Gentiles too, if they are worthy, have a share in the future life, in opposition to *R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos*, who taught that no Gentile can have a share in the world to come, based on Ps. 9. 18.<sup>10</sup> The pious of the Gentiles have merits which entitle them to share the future life. Another dispute of these two scribes deals also with an aspect of our doctrine. *R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos* refers, Eccles. 11. 2, 'seven' to the commandment of Sabbath, and 'eight' to that of circumcision, and reproduces *Elijah's* prayer (1 Kings 18. 14) in the following version: 'Lord of the World, if Israel has no other but these two merits alone, it is worthy that rain shall come down for these their merits.' *R. Joshua ben Hananja* refers both numbers (7 and 8) to the performance of the Pesach and Tabernacles festivals.<sup>11</sup> The merits of Sabbath and Circumcision, or of the festivals suffice to bring the blessing of rain to Israel. A third difference deals with the state of the children of the wicked, who died whilst they were minors. *R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos* teaches they will neither live, nor be judged in the world to come (based on Mal. 3. 19). *R. Joshua ben Hananiah*, however, says they will come to the next world, and interprets the words: 'And he will not leave him root or branch' in the sense that there will be found no merit for them, upon which they can rely.<sup>12</sup> Both of these scribes knew the doctrine of merits. Not only Jews have merits, but Gentiles too. Among Jews, the wicked have no merits, yet the sin of the wicked

<sup>10</sup> v. M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 90; b. Sanh. 105 a; according to Tosefta even *R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos* does not refer to Gentiles generally, but merely to the wicked among them, ch. xiii, 434. 1 and ff. Cf. also *Justin Martyr's* dialogue with Tryphon, ch. viii, Graetz, *Geschichte*, IV, 4, p. 394; Goldfahn, *MGWJ.*, 1873, p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> b. Erubin 40 B; Pesikta B. 192 a; Pes. r., 201 B; Eccles. r. 11. 2; v. Jerome's *Questiones* to Eccles. 11. 2; Brüll, *Jahrbücher*, I. 236.

<sup>12</sup> Aboth *R. Nathan*, I, ch. 36, p. 107; v., however, Tos. Synh., ch. 13, p. 434, 1. 1 ff., where *R. Gamaliel*, II, occurs instead of *Eliezer*, j. Seb. 35 c, b. Synh. 110 B.

parents cannot deprive the innocent children of their share in the future life. Of special merits they point out those of Sabbath and Circumcision on the one side, and on the other side that of observing the festivals. For these merits the blessing of rain is bestowed upon the people and the land. *Eleazar of Modiim* is the first among the Tannaites to lay stress upon the Doctrine of *Zechuth Aboth*, the merits of the fathers.<sup>12a</sup> This scribe had chosen his own path in many other teachings, so also in this doctrine. Standing under the continuous influence of the great political struggle of his days, his sayings reflect truly the feeling of a great mind and heart in the last fight of Judaea's independence, in the period between the destruction of the temple and the revolution of Bar-Kochba (70 C. E.—135 C. E.). Trembling for the fate of his beloved people, hoping for the glorious advent of freedom, fearing a crushing defeat, rejoicing at the wonderful reports of success of the few against the many, mourning at the news of death and terror, he found consolation in, and instilled encouragement in the hearts of his audience from, the narrative of the Bible. Perhaps at a moment, when the warriors of Judaea withstood and were about to repulse the sanguinary armies of Rome, he read to himself or to his fellow-citizens the fight of Israel with Amalek, and found there that Moses' reference to the merits of the fathers helped Israel to victory. He explains, namely, *Exod. 17. 8* ('to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill') in the sense: to-morrow we shall decree a fast, and pray, relying on the deeds of the fathers. *R. Joshua ben Hananja* takes the verse literally.<sup>13</sup> This doctrine is often repeated by the same teacher.<sup>14</sup> The remembrance of the

<sup>12a</sup> Hereto belongs perhaps a similar saying of Theodosius of Rome, *M. Ps.*, ed. B., p. 229, ed. Ps., p. 25 a.

<sup>13</sup> *v. Mech. 54 a*, of *RSbJ.*, p. 82; *Pes. B.*, p. 21 B, anonym.; *Ps. Jon. Targ. to Exod. 17. 8*: שׁוֹרָא = top = deeds of the father; הַגִּבְעָה = hill = deed of the mothers.

<sup>14</sup> *v. L. A. Rosenthal in Semitic Studies in memory of the Rev. Dr. Alex. Kohut*, Berlin, 1897, p. 465.

deeds of the Fathers and Mothers of Israel caused Moses' prayer to be heard and answered. The same explanation is given to v. 10, 'And they took a stone, and put it under him'; meaning the remembrance of the pious deeds of the Fathers.<sup>15</sup> He might have expressed his disapproval of military methods. Armies and arms will not help us, prayer and merits will lead us to victory. Historical circumstances help us to understand also R. Eleazar's explanation of the miracles connected with the Manna. In the time of starvation, in the besieged country, where they were cut off from all resources, he pointed out and explained the wonderful sustenance of the fathers in the wilderness. He finds in the word *ויבנו*, *Exod. 16. 10*, an allusion to the deeds of the fathers. 'They looked forward' to the works of the Fathers, for it is said 'the wilderness', just as there is nothing in the desert, so was neither sin nor iniquity with our first fathers.<sup>16</sup> Similarly he saw in *הנני* (v. 4) a reference to the merits of the Fathers.<sup>17</sup>

R. Joshua ben Hananiah disputes all these cases. He either takes the passages in their strict literal meaning, or he attributes the success of the fulfilment of the prayers to the merits of Moses, or of Israel. We cannot overlook in these different views and opinions the trains of thought we began with. We see Eleazar of Modiim following the way of Shemaiah; R. Joshua ben Hananiah, however, keeps strictly to the line marked out by Abtaljon. Hillel, who tried to establish a common ground for both views, has not succeeded in bringing the two different aspects of life together and harmonizing them. Under the blows of world-history and national catastrophes the old antagonism revived. Certainly, owing to the tragic events which followed the destruction of the Temple, and during the last great fight for freedom and independence, the view of Eleazar of Modiim became the general and dominant one. The conquered and down-trodden people lost with the

<sup>15</sup> Mech., p. 54 B.

<sup>16</sup> Mech. 48 a of *RSbJ.*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Mech. 47 a; *RSbJ.*, p. 73.

last shadows of its independence also its self-consciousness and pride in itself, and from now on relied on the greatness of the past, on the deeds and merits of the ancestors and the pious of old. Few of the subsequent teachers emphasize the self-acquired merits, or thought it sufficient to refer to their own merits. A people under the heel of foreign rulers dreams of the past or of the future, but does not like to think too much of the present!

He, Eleazar of Modiim, expressed further the view that the patriarchs prayed in their graves for their children, when the latter were in distress and trouble, and their (the fathers') prayers were heard, and their requests granted by God. For the merit of these prayers was the Manna given.<sup>18</sup> Finally we have to mention his view that people, who transgress certain commandments, e.g. who profane the sanctuaries (or the Sabbath, according to the reading in AN), despise the festivals, who put their fellow-men publicly to shame, destroy the covenant of our father Abraham, and find in the Torah opinions contrary to the Halachah, although they have knowledge of the Torah, and good deeds, nevertheless they have no share in the world to come.<sup>19</sup> The merits one has obtained must not be damaged by faults, such as given in the catalogue above, undoubtedly frequent among his contemporaries. *Eleazar ben Azarja* searched and found that Israel was delivered from Egypt for the merits of Abraham,<sup>20</sup> for the merit of this patriarch was also the sea divided before Israel.<sup>21</sup> In the school of *R. Ishmael* they discussed the question, 'for whose merit does the world exist?' And they taught, 'for the merits of the righteous'.<sup>22</sup> The dividing of the sea he ascribes to the merit of Jerusalem,<sup>23</sup> and the revelation of God in Egypt and deliverance to the merit of the performance and observance of the Law.<sup>24</sup> More frequent

<sup>18</sup> Mech. 49 a of *RSbJ.*, p. 77.

<sup>19</sup> *Aboth.*, III, 112.

<sup>20</sup> Mech. 19 B.

<sup>21</sup> Mech. 29 B.

<sup>22</sup> *Midr. haggadol*, Genesis, 3 a, and above, p. 11, note 40.

<sup>23</sup> Mech. 29 a.

<sup>24</sup> Mech. 8 a and 12 a.

and varied is the information we get about our doctrine from the Agadah of *R. Akiba*. As to the theory of the doctrine we learn that the prayers of the children can save their parents from the punishment of hell.<sup>25</sup> According to him the delivery from Egypt was for the merit of the pious women,<sup>26</sup> and the division of the sea by the merit of Jacob.<sup>27</sup> Further, we hear that God spoke with Moses for the merit of Israel, and not for his own merit.<sup>28</sup> And finally we hear that Job was blessed by God for the merit of repentance and good deeds performed by him.<sup>29</sup>

Of *R. Akiba's* contemporaries we have to call attention first of all to *R. Tarphon*. We have a report of a meeting which took place in the shadow of the dovecot at *Jabne* on a Sabbath afternoon. After discussing a Halachic question, they were asked: 'Why does the text tell us all the details of the caravan of the Ishmaelites that came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh?' (Gen. 37. 25). The answer is: To teach you how far the merits of the righteous help them (להודיע זכותן של צדיקים כמה מסייעתן); for, had the Ishmaelites carried as usual hides, asphalt, and other evil-smelling things, he (Joseph) would have died.<sup>30</sup> A second question raised at that gathering was: 'For what merit was Judah worthy to be the king among his brethren?' (or the tribe of Judah to have the leading part in Jewish history). *R. Tarphon* said to the questioners: 'Answer yourselves!' They said: 'He was worthy to become king for the advice he gave

<sup>25</sup> v. p. 156 f.

<sup>26</sup> b. Sota, 11 B, *R. Avira*, Exod. r. 1. 16, read *R. Akiba*.

<sup>27</sup> Mech. 29 B, Exod. r. 21. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Mech. 2 a.

<sup>29</sup> Ruth r. 6. 6 and Parall.

<sup>30</sup> Mech. 31 B (*Tos. Ber.* 10. 15 has a different reading), reply: אלא שנתנו את הצדיק ההוא בין דברים החביבים והרי דברים קלוחומר ומה בשעת כעסן של צדיקים מרחמים עליהם בשעת הרחמים על אחת כמה וכמה. God shows mercy unto the righteous even in his wrath, how much more in 'the time of mercy'. The same teaching explains also Lev. 10. 6 and 1 Kings 13. 18. It amounts to the same as the phrase in the Mechilta, זכותן מסייעתן.

his brethren not to kill Joseph.' R. Tarphon objected to this suggestion on the ground that his advice, which saved Joseph's life, was good enough to atone for the selling of Joseph and the anxiety of his father, but never so praiseworthy as to get him the rulership. Then they suggested: 'For the merit of acknowledging his sin, and saving Tamar's life.' R. Tarphon rejected this view. The confession was sufficient to atone for his sin. A third suggestion was put forward. For he pledged himself for Benjamin. This hypothesis shared the fate of the previous one. R. Tarphon thought that there is no special merit in it, if a surety discharges his duties. Then they said: 'Now tell us!' R. Tarphon said: 'When the tribes stood before the sea, they debated who should enter first (v. Hos. 12. 1); the leader of Judah, Nahson ben Aminadab, put an end to this discussion, and jumped into the waves of the sea. Therefore was he chosen to the Kingdom.'<sup>31</sup>

There must have been a peculiar merit in Judah, thought these Rabbis, who discussed the question, which made Judah worthy to become the Ruler and King. Without merit, such a dignity seemed to them quite impossible. Judah's merit was his enthusiasm and self-sacrifice, of which he had shown signs. Further, we learn that this problem of merit was discussed in the school of R. Akiba, among his colleagues, as well as among his pupils. We have other proofs for this fact. Of *Simon ben Azzai* we know from other sources too that he thought of and taught of the merits for the sake of which the world was created. He saw the aim of the creation of the world in the obedience to God. 'For the one who fears God was the world created.'<sup>32</sup> According to some readings this view was held by another member of the company who

<sup>31</sup> Mech. 31 B; M. Ps., ed. Buber, b. 341; Tosefta 10. 1, 22 ff. gives a different report. According to the same the author is R. Akiba, and the problem discussed by four of his pupils: *Eleazar ben Matja*, *Hananja ben Hakinai*, *Simon ben Azzai*, and *Simon of Teman*.

<sup>32</sup> b. Ber. 6 B.

entered the Pardes, *Simon ben Zoma*. This sage is credited with another saying, which looks like an enlargement of R. Akiba's teaching. He teaches, namely, that not merely with Moses but with all the other prophets did God speak for Israel's merit, and not for their own individual merit.<sup>33</sup>

By another statement of *Ben Zoma* we are enabled to establish the right authorship in the previous statement (b. Ber. 6 B), which solved the great problem: 'For whose sake was the world created?' For the sake of the pious. Of Ben Zoma, we hear that he used to say, seeing the crowds of people on the steps of the Temple Mount: 'Blessed be He who created all these to serve me.' Then he compared the travail which Adam endured with the great comfort he enjoys, and sums up: 'A good guest, what does he say? May the owner be remembered for blessing, how many kinds of wine, how many dishes did he set before us. All he did was done for my sake. A bad guest, what does he say? What have I eaten? A loaf, one dish, I drank one glass of wine! All he did, he has done for the sake of his wife and sons.'<sup>34</sup> Ben Zoma teaches here that everything created by God was created for man's sake, and he seems to disagree emphatically from those scribes who taught that the world was created for the sake of the pious alone. They are like the tactless guests, who say: 'The master of the house (God) took the trouble of preparing the meal merely for the sake of his household (the pious and righteous).' 'No', Ben Zoma preached, 'the table is laid for mankind, everybody has a right to share it.'

Of the other scribes, mentioned among the four pupils of R. Akiba, *Simon of Teman* also took part in another discussion, which often and throughout Talmud and Midrash engaged the attention of the teachers. What was the merit of the Israelites that they were redeemed from Egypt? that the sea was divided before them? We

<sup>33</sup> Mech. 2 a, v. p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Job 36. 24; Tos., p. 14, l. 27-p. 15, l. 3; b. Ber. 58 a; j. Ber. 13 c.

can understand that the thoughts of the teachers after the destruction and before the defeat of Bar Kochba turned to that great period of biblical history which was through all ages a living well of inspiration for all those who longed for freedom and redemption from the chains of slavery! Simon of Teman says: 'For the merit of circumcision was the sea divided before them.'<sup>35</sup> *Eliezer ben Judah* of ברתותא ascribes this great event to the merits of the tribes, and *Simon of Katron* (קטרון) to Joseph, *R. Benaah* to Abraham.<sup>36</sup> From this brief list, to which we may add the opinion of R. Akiba and R. Eleazar ben Azarja, we see how far the view of Shemaiah over-ruled that of Abtaljon. With the exception of Simon of Teman, all the scribes found the merits in the past, in the life and deeds of Abraham or Joseph or the tribes, but not in the virtues of those who stood on the shores of the sea. Simon of Teman alone considered the deeds of those who were about to benefit by the miracle. Yet even R. Akiba could not shake off entirely the influence of Abtaljon's view, when he said that for the merit of the pious women in Israel were the Israelites redeemed from Egypt. This doctrine, as we prove later on, was advanced for apologetical reasons. Still an endeavour was made to find the virtues among the redeemed and those who shared the miracle, and not in those of their ancestors. Yet it must also be considered that one reading has instead of R. Akiba's name that of *R. Avira*, which is more plausible and likely. In spite of the general prevalence of Shemaiah's view, we find besides Simon of Teman other teachers before 135 C. E. as well as after that year, who still propagated and adhered to Abtaljon's conception. We have to mention especially *Matja ben Charesk*. In a homily based on Ezekiel 16. 6 this scribe says: 'The time came when God's promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled,' i. e. when He shall deliver the Israelites. Yet they had no commandments

<sup>35</sup> Mech. 29 B; cf. Jer. 33. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Mech. 29 B.



to keep, they had no observances to observe, for the merits of which they deserved to be redeemed. Therefore God gave to them two commandments (i.e. the blood of circumcision and the blood of the Pascal offering), in order that they shall be engaged with them, and shall have merits to be redeemed.<sup>37</sup> This scribe surely held all vicarious merits insufficient to bring about the redemption. He does not take into consideration the merits of the fathers or the merits of the tribes, he points to actual merits acquired by those who were about to obtain freedom. A story can give us illustration of the frame of mind of the contemporary Rabbis, describing a meeting which took place between *R. Jose ben Kisma* and *R. Hanina ben Taradjon*. The former was ill, and the latter called on him according to prevailing custom and law. *R. Jose ben Kisma* said to his visitor: 'Hanina! My brother! dost thou not know that to this nation (Rome) was given the rulership from heaven? A nation that has destroyed His house, burnt His Temple, killed His pious ones and His best ones and still exists! Behold I heard of thee that thou art sitting and art engaged in the study of the law, and holdest the book in thy bosom.' *R. Hanina* said: 'May heaven have mercy.' *R. Jose* replied: 'I told thee words of common sense and thou sayest: May heaven have mercy. I wonder if they (the Romans) will not burn thee with the scrolls of the Torah in fire.' *R. Hanina*: 'Rabbi, *am I going to have a share in the world to come?*' (מה אני לחיי העולם הבא). *R. Jose*: 'What hast thou done?' *R. Hanina*: 'Once I mistook my money put aside for the Purim meal for money of charity, and distributed it among the poor.' *R. Jose*: 'I wish I had a share of thine, would that thy lot were mine too.'<sup>38</sup> This scribe, who is also included in some writings among the 'self-complacent' Rabbis, 'idol-worshippers of the law', the 'virtuosi of piety', after hearing this terrible death sentence

<sup>37</sup> Mech. 5 a.<sup>38</sup> b. A. Z. 18 a.

asked in all humility and modesty: 'Have I a share in future life?' He is not sure whether his life, devoted to the study of the Law and spent in deeds of charity, deserves future life. R. Jose ben Kisma has to tell him: 'I wish my share would be as thine, my lot as thine.' That means to say: you have plenty of merits, not merely for yourself, but also for others. This teacher, we see, thought that the merits of righteous men hold good and are available for others as well. As most significant in the whole story is the fact that R. Jose is not satisfied with the contempt with which Hanina ben Taradjon looked upon the prohibition of the Roman Government, which forbade the study of the Law, because according to R. Jose's party standpoint this attitude was exaggerated. Rome must have had merits, which enabled it to be a world-wide empire.

(2) We turn now to the teachers of a different period! The scribes, who lived after the catastrophe of Bethar, were faced by new problems on all aspects and turns of life. In the Halachah as well as in the Agadah the changed circumstances, the new environment, the varied activities left their sharp traces and signs. Just as the leaders of Israel could not rid themselves after the year of 68 C. E. of the memories and effects of the 9th of Ab, so the teachers after 135 could not wipe out from their hearts the impressions of the years of their greatest war for freedom and liberty. Under this influence we have to view the different aspects on our doctrine. The change is seen first of all in *R. Meir's* Agadah. For the general theory of our doctrine we learn that everything in life depends on the merits of man. There are rich and poor in all walks of life, in all professions and all occupations. One cannot say one art or business leads to wealth, the other to poverty. Worldly wealth or poverty are distributed according to merits.<sup>39</sup> Secondly he points out

<sup>39</sup> M. Kid. 4. 14; j. Kid. 66 d; b. Kid. 82 a; Tosefta, p. 343, l. 4, Rabbi.

the merit of charity, which has got the power to lengthen life. He came namely to a place called *מטלא*, where he could not detect an old man, for they all died very young. R. Meir said to them: 'Are you, perhaps, descendants of the High Priest Eli?' (v. 1 Sam. 2. 32). They said to him: 'Rabbi pray for us!' He said to them: 'Go and do charity (*וטפלו בצדקה*) and you will live long.'<sup>40</sup> Here his saying ought to be mentioned: 'For the sin of Mezuzah do young children die.'<sup>41</sup> In his Agadah we find special attention paid to the merits of the study of the Law, of circumcision, of hospitality, of the fathers, and last but not least to that of the children. He who studies the Law acquires many merits, it makes him worthy in such a degree, *as if the whole world were created for his sake* (*ולא עור אלא שכל העולם כדאי הוא לו*). The study of the Law brings a man to merits and removes him from sin.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly R. Meir joins those who held that the world was created for the merit of the students of the Torah. Yet the world exists also for the merit of circumcision.<sup>43</sup> In another passage R. Meir deals with this commandment in a similar way.<sup>44</sup> Abraham did not become perfect until he performed this law. Maybe that the reminiscences of Hadrianic persecutions, which claimed so many good men as sacrifices for the sake of these commandments, or the agitation of the early Church induced R. Meir to emphasize both of them. In his address to the people of Usha he dwelt on the great merits of hospitality.<sup>45</sup> Significant is his attitude towards his teacher Elisha ben Abuja, the 'Acher' of the scribes. People asked R. Meir, after the

<sup>40</sup> Gen. r. 59. 1; Midr. Sam., ed. Buber, p. 71, v. Prov. 16. 31.

<sup>41</sup> b. Sabb. 32 b.

<sup>42</sup> Aboth, VI, 1. I see in *כדאי הוא לו* an abbreviation: *כדאי הוא לו* [*שנברא בשביל לו*], v. Hoffmann's translation: 'die ganze Welt ist es werth, für ihn allein da zu sein'. Bacher renders it: 'ihm gebührt die ganze Welt'.

<sup>43</sup> Pirke of R. El. in Jacob Hagoser's *המילה*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> M. Ned. 31 a.

<sup>45</sup> Cant. r. 2. 5.

death of Elisha: 'In the world to come if they ask you whom do you want, your father or your teacher, what will you say?' R. Meir: 'First my father, then my teacher.' The questioners: 'And will they listen to you?' R. Meir: 'Certainly.' We learned it in the Mishnah: We rescue the cover with the book, the bag with the Phylacteries, 'we rescue Elisha for the merit of his Torah'.<sup>46</sup> Elisha, in spite of his heresies and apostasy, did not have to drink the cup of poison, as a greater philosopher and a smaller atheist in Athens, had not to flee, like the Stagirite, was not arrested like Anaxagoras, was not persecuted like Theodorus or Diogenes of Apollonia by the more enlightened Greeks,<sup>47</sup> although he lived among 'barbarous and fanatic' Jews. Why? For the merits of the Torah which he acquired. How could unlearned men bring a scholar to account for his opinions? This ordeal, it is true, Elisha has had to face, but much later, for in the last eighteen centuries the question of his opinions and thoughts was often handled in sermons and monographs. R. Meir had friendly relations, just as other scribes, with a Gentile, from whom we learn the doctrine that this world, with all its pleasures and good, belongs to the Gentiles, and the world to come is destined for the Jews.<sup>48</sup> For what merit? Certainly for the merits of the fathers. For R. Meir held that 'the dead of the Gentiles are dead, those of Israel are not dead, for by their merits the living exist' (חיים עומדין). An instance to support this view is given from history. When Israel did that deed (the golden calf), had Moses not mentioned and appealed to the merits of the fathers (Exod. 32. 13) Israel surely would have perished from the face of the earth.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, R. Meir ascribes the revelation and the teaching of the Torah to

<sup>46</sup> Eccles. r. 7. 18; M. Sabb. 116 B; and Eccles. r., ed. Buber, p. 151; b. Hag. 15 B.

<sup>47</sup> v. Lange, *History of Materialism*, I, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Pes., p. 59 B; Pes. r., p. 82 B; Tanh. f. 245 B; Num. r., ch. 21. 18; M. Prov. 13. 25.

<sup>49</sup> Tanh. f. 57 a.

Israel as the merit of future generations and not of the fathers. In the contrary way God would not accept, according to the legend of R. Meir, the surety offered by the patriarchs, they are themselves in need of sureties!<sup>50</sup> It may be that R. Meir's alleged alien origin—he 'was supposed to have come of a proselyte family—induced him to form this strange legend. He wanted to impress his contemporaries that the triumph of the orah, or of the ideals of the Torah, are to be sought in the future, and not in the past.

Just as numerous, in comparison with the sayings in the previous period, are the references in R. Meir's Agadah, even richer is the Agadah of the second pupil of R. Akiba, of *R. Simon ben Jochai* on the doctrine we deal with. His Zechuth itself became proverbial through the ages. In a saying of his we read: 'I am able to free the whole world from judgement, from the hour of my birth up to now. In case my son Eleazar be with me, I can do the same for all creatures from the beginning of creation up to now. In case Jotham ben Uziah were with us, even for those who will come into being from now up to the end of the days.'<sup>51</sup> A somewhat different version is given in a Palestinian source. 'If Abraham likes to justify (by his merits) all people from his time up to my time, my merits will justify them from now up to the time of the Messiah, if not I join with Achiah *השילני*, and we will justify by our merits all creatures from Abraham up to the time of the Messiah.'<sup>52</sup> The merits of Abraham, or of Achiah, together with those of the speaker, can save all the generations from judgement. Apart from the somewhat difficult exaggeration of R. Simon ben Jochai's own merits, it is clear that the merits of some persons can protect or justify others. The same difficulty arises in another saying of this teacher, where he says: 'I saw that those who have

<sup>50</sup> v. Cant. r. 1. 24; M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 76; anonym.

<sup>51</sup> b. Sukkah, 45 B.

<sup>52</sup> j. Ber. 13 d; Gen. r. 35. 2; Pesikta, 36 a.

a share in the world to come are very few, yet if there are three, I and my son (Eleazar) are two of them.'<sup>53</sup> Yet he teaches that the world cannot exist without the number of thirty righteous men, who are like Abraham; if they are less than thirty, even three, he and his son are always included.<sup>54</sup> There must have been something rather in the events of his life or his time, than in his nature and character, which induced this scribe to utter such sentences, which if understood literally sound like conceit, or taken allegorically mean nothing to us.

In other parts of our doctrine, we find that R.S.b.J. was not yet aware of the teaching that the world was created for the merit of Israel (v. p. 125). The world stands (or stood) firm for the sake of the Tabernacle. Before the Tabernacle was erected the earth was trembling, since the Tabernacle was established the world became firm.<sup>55</sup> He attributes the delivery from Egypt to the merit of circumcision,<sup>56</sup> the future redemption will come about through the merit of the observance of the Sabbath.<sup>57</sup> The surrounding and friends of the just man enjoy the merits, are prosperous for his sake, and share his blessing. R. Simon ben Jochai shows this in the case of Og,<sup>58</sup> of Lot,<sup>59</sup> and of Rahab.<sup>60</sup> Theoretically R. S. b. J. defines the idea of Zechut in the following words: 'If a man was just, a perfect righteous man all his life, and sinned at last, then he loses all his merits (Ezek. 33. 13 f.); if a man, however, be wicked all his life, and he repented at last, God receives him.<sup>61</sup> There is only one treasury in heaven with God, and it is that of 'fear of Heaven'.<sup>62</sup> He further

<sup>53</sup> j. Ber. 13 d; b. Sukkah, 45 b; Gen. r. 35. 2; Pes. 87 B, all given by Hezekiah in the name of R. Jeremiah.

<sup>54</sup> v. the same sources as in the previous note, and j. A. Z. 40 c; Hullin, 92 a.

<sup>55</sup> Pes. B., p. 6 a; Pes. r. 18 B.

<sup>56</sup> Mech. 19 B, 20 a.

<sup>57</sup> b. Sabb. 118 B.

<sup>58</sup> b. Niddah, 61 a.

<sup>59</sup> Tanh. f. 26 B.

<sup>60</sup> j. Ber. 8 B; j. Synh. 28 c; and Ecces. r. 5. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Tos. 337. 1 f.; b. Kid. 40 B; j. Pea. 16 B; Cant. r. 6. 1.

<sup>62</sup> שמים ראות R. Johanan in his name, b. Ber. 33 B.

emphasizes the merit of charity in his speech in Usha, which merit will bring about the resurrection of the dead.<sup>63</sup> Finally we have to enumerate his views on sin. Children die for the sins of their parents. Those of the generation of the flood, who perished before they reached the age of 100, therefore not liable to punishment, perished for the sins of their parents.<sup>64</sup> The family of the tax farmer or robber share the disgrace or punishment of the disgraced, for they protect them. The same applies to the family of the Moloch worshipper.<sup>65</sup> The persecution in the time of Haman came upon the Jews, because they ate the food of the Gentiles.<sup>66</sup> There is no punishment without sin, and the latter may be transferred from one person to another; just as the blessing or the merit of the righteous is available to the wicked, so the sin of the wicked is shared by his nearest, in case they support the wicked.

Of *R. Jose ben Halaftha* we have only a few statements bearing on our subject. His questioner, a Matrona, wanted to know by what merit has Israel been chosen to be God's people? His reply was that God knows whom to choose,<sup>67</sup> which means Israel has merits which justify this choice. In another dialogue with the same Matrona, he taught that the souls of the righteous are put in the treasury.<sup>68</sup> This might be in opposition to *R. Simon ben Jochai*, according to whom only 'fear of Heaven' deserves a place in the treasury. The same reason may be given to his varied sayings which start, 'may my share be' (יהא חלקי), where he enumerates besides 'fear of Heaven' some positive duties.<sup>69</sup> *R. Jose ben Halaftha* taught further that the good deeds of the children affect the fate of the wicked parents. Hannah, by her prayers, saved Korah and his company

<sup>63</sup> Cant. r. 2. 16.

<sup>64</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 12; ed. Pr., p. 23, has *R. Simon ben Lakish*.

<sup>65</sup> Lev. 20. 5; Sifra, 81 b; Seb. 39 a.

<sup>66</sup> Cant. r. 7. 8; b. Meg. 12 a.

<sup>67</sup> M. Sam., ed. Buber, p. 70; Num. r. 3. 2.

<sup>68</sup> v. Eccl. r. 3. 27, and p. 21.

<sup>69</sup> b. Sabb. 118 b.

from Hell.<sup>70</sup> Finally, we see R. Jose ben Halafta searching for the reason, why proselytes suffer? They ought to be happy and prosperous. The theory advanced by this teacher is, because they do not take care to learn the details and particulars of the observances properly.<sup>71</sup> As the entire Agadah of R. Jose ben Halafta bears different aspects and characteristics not to be found in that of his contemporaries, which rightly suggests a certain independence of thought and aloofness of habit, so it is with his problems, or his method of dealing with them, as far as they are connected with our doctrine.

Another great teacher of this period was *R. Judah ben Ilai*. In his teachings we can more easily discover the link between him and his contemporaries. It is not certain whether we have his view on the much disputed question of the aim of the creation (v. p. 115). In discussing the merit of Judah he adopts the view of R. Akiba and R. Tarphon.<sup>72</sup> The redemption from Egypt was for the merit of circumcision, as R. Matja ben Heresh and R. Simon ben Jochai expounded.<sup>72a</sup> The future redemption will arise from the merit of charity.<sup>73</sup> The patriarchs were blessed for the merit of the tithe they gave,<sup>74</sup> just as the commandments were given to Israel to make them worthy to inherit the world to come.<sup>74a</sup> Wicked parents are saved in future life by their innocent children (v. p. 158). There is more than one reference to the merits of the fathers. For instance, in the case of Jethro's daughters (Exod. 2. 19), where they said: 'He (i. e. Moses) drew water for us for the sake of our father.'<sup>75</sup> R. Judah ben Ilai adhered to

<sup>70</sup> j. Sanh. 29 a; M. Sam., p. 62, 'Rabbi'; Gen. r. 98. 2, 'Rabbanan', in R. Jose's name by *R. Joshua ben Levi*.

<sup>71</sup> b. Jeb. 48 b.

<sup>72</sup> v. pp. 45, b. Sotah, 37 a, against R. Meir, who held that Benjamin was the first to set foot into the sea.

<sup>72a</sup> v. p. 144.

<sup>73</sup> b. BB. 10 a.

<sup>74</sup> Pes. r. 127 b; Gen. r. 43. 10; Tanh. f. 32 a anonym.; B. I., p. 119.

<sup>74a</sup> v. above, p. 16, n. 59.

<sup>75</sup> Cant. r. 2. 16; Exod. r. 1. 39



the view of Shemaiah, who did not emphasize those merits which man acquires for himself, but those which have been acquired by the fathers. Abtaljon's thought is pointed out sharply in the teachings of R. Judah's opponent *R. Nehemia*.<sup>76</sup> He informs us further that whatever merits a man gathers, whatever good we do in this world, it is merely a trifle in comparison with the mercy and grace of God, which He bestows upon mankind. Our works can never be good enough or sufficient to deserve God's loving-kindness.<sup>76a</sup> God shows us mercy for His name's sake. R. Nehemia seems to be the first who revived and popularized this old conception. Abtaljon's influence is felt in his theory about the redemption from Egypt, although only some sources ascribe to him the view that God delivered Israel for the merit of the Elders and the pious men, who lived in Egypt.<sup>77</sup> Yet in another source the Torah is mentioned as the merit for redemption by him. Further, we are told in his name that the merit of faith made the Israelites worthy to sing the song on the sea, which betrays the influence of Abtaljon's world view at once. Because 'to sing the song' is really a phrase signifying the seeing of miracles,<sup>78</sup> whilst an anonymous teacher adopts entirely in this case Shemaiah's theory, that the song was sung for the merits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

*R. Eleazar ben Shamua* teaches us that the world exists for the merit of one righteous.<sup>79</sup> Joshua and Elders after the battle of Ai (Joshua 7. 6) referred in their prayers to the merit of Abraham, for whose sake they expected success.<sup>80</sup> They had no merits of their own, therefore they relied upon that of Abraham. Parallel to this is his saying that Aaron's surviving sons escaped the fate of their brethren for the merit of Aaron, their father.<sup>81</sup> He points

<sup>76</sup> Exod. r. 15. 5.

<sup>76a</sup> Pes. 99 a; Exod. r. 41. 1.

<sup>77</sup> v. Cant. r. 2. 19.

<sup>78</sup> Exod. r. 23. 6; v. M. Ps., p. 135.

<sup>79</sup> b. Hag. 12 B; cf. Prov. 10. 29.

<sup>80</sup> Gen. r. 39. 24.

<sup>81</sup> Sifra to Lev. 10. 12, p. 44 B, v. p. 7.

out, finally, the merit of the study of the Law and good works, which protect men from the trouble and pain of the Messianic age,<sup>82</sup> and the great merit of dwelling in the Holy Land.<sup>83</sup> *Eliezer ben Jacob* might have attempted to contradict the poor opinion R. Simon ben Jochai had of his contemporaries, when he said: 'There is no generation which has not got a just man like Abraham, like Jacob, like Moses, and like Samuel.'<sup>84</sup> The world exists for the merit of the righteous, and there is no generation lacking such men. We ought to mention here also his saying: 'He who fulfils a commandment acquires for himself a (Parakleitos) defender. He who commits a sin, however, gets an accuser.'<sup>85</sup> A man who does a good deed acquires by it a defender and solicitor, which means nothing else but a merit. It is doubtful whether the saying of R. Eliezer ben Jacob, that Israel was redeemed from Egypt for the merit of Hananja, Mishael, and Azarja, is genuine.<sup>86</sup> If it is, then we learn first of all that he also took part in the discussions which attracted the attention of the sages of the second and third centuries as topics of their sermons and homilies, namely, for whose sake or for what merit was Israel released? And secondly, that he is one of the many teachers who taught that the merits of the children benefit the parents. And thirdly, we notice for the first time the act of martyrdom being applied to our doctrine. Maybe, he thought, the merits of those holy men who sanctified the name of God in the recent past, will accelerate our salvation, and our redemption too. It is significant that the merits of the martyrs were not exploited in the Judaism of the first centuries. *Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilean*, the third Eleazar of this period, expounds Ezek. 33. 24 on the basis of the doctrine of the merits. Abraham, who could not rely upon the merits of his fathers, inherited the Land of Promise; we who can rely

<sup>82</sup> b. Sanh. 98 B.

<sup>84</sup> Gen. r. 56. 9, and Gen. r. 74. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Aboth, IV, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Sifre Deut., § 80.

<sup>86</sup> M. Ps., p. 473.

upon the merits of the fathers, how much more hope have we got to inherit the land of Israel.<sup>87</sup> In agreement with this view is another saying of the same Tannaite, when he says: 'If thou seest a righteous undertaking a journey, and thou also dost intend to take the same journey, accelerate the journey by three days or delay it on his account for three days, so that thou mayest go with him together for ministering angels accompany him.'<sup>88</sup> The idea of the teaching is that the traveller will be prosperous and successful on account of the merits of the righteous. Yet if a wicked man plans a journey, one has to delay or prearrange his proposed journey, for the angels of evil accompany the wicked, and he might be caught by the sin of his unlucky fellow-traveller. He endeavoured further to verify by Jer. 16. 5 the saying of R. Eliezer ben Jacob that charity and good works acquire defenders.<sup>89</sup> Further he explained the merit of Noah's children. Why were they not punished, for only Noah found favour in the eyes of God? They were less than a hundred years of age, and at that age, in the time of the flood, people became responsible for their deeds after a hundred.<sup>90</sup> In opposition

<sup>87</sup> Tos. Sotah, 305. 19, where the view of R. Eliezer is given in the name of R. Nehemia, and that of R. Nehemia in the name of R. Jose the Galilean. However, as we have seen above, R. Nehemia never held this view of Zechuth Aboth, therefore we have to accept the better reading of Codex Erfurt, v. Zuckerman's note. *R. Nehemia's* saying corroborates our observations made, p. 56. Abraham, who had only one son whom he was ready to sacrifice, and who inherited the land, how much more we, who sacrifice many sons and daughters unto Moloch, *ibid.*, l. 17 f. That is the doctrine of self-acquired merits. That is the meaning of Ezek. 33. 24. Abraham was one (i. e. could not rely on the merits of his fathers, R. El., or Abraham had sacrificed one son, R. Neh.), and he inherited the land; but we are many (i. e. we have the merits of the fathers, R. El., have sacrificed so many children, R. Neh., therefore have also our own but greater merits), surely the land is given us for inheritance.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Ps. 91. 11 and 109 b; Tos. Sabb. 136. 20 ff.; Jalk. Ps. 843; v. also R. Ishmael ben Jochanan ben Beroka Aboth, R. Nathan and Tanh. f. 42 a.

<sup>89</sup> v. Tosefta Peah, 24, l. 31 f.; v. Tobit, 12. 8.

<sup>90</sup> Gen. r. 26. 2, ed. Theodor, p. 275; v. also above, p. 54.

to R. Simon ben Jochai, he taught that all the souls of the righteous are preserved in the treasury in heaven.<sup>91</sup>

*R. Joshua ben Korha* left the impression in a few of his sayings that he had thought a good deal about the question, which had engaged till his day a very few of the scribes, namely: 'For whose merit was the world created?' We have more than one remark on this subject by him. His view is, for the sake of man was everything created. The same opinion is expressed in his answer to a question: 'Why did the cattle and beast perish in the flood? There was a man who arranged a banquet for the wedding of his son. His son died meanwhile and the father destroyed everything. He said: "For whose sake have I done all this?" For my son. Since he died, there is no need for it at all. Likewise God said: "For whose sake have I created all these?" Not for man's sake? Twice he (man) sinned, for what purpose shall there be cattle and beast?'<sup>92</sup> Yet he seemed to have narrowed down this general view, and taught that merely for the sake of the righteous, among men, was the world created, and in a third passage we read even that the world was created for the sake of Abraham, who might have been thought of as the ideal just man. The latter point of view may be seen in the comparison drawn by the same teacher between Abraham and Moses, much in favour of the former,<sup>93</sup> and much to the detriment of the latter. As an eye-witness of the Hadrianic persecutions, it is only natural that he pointed out the great merit of circumcision. Great, he says, is the merit of circumcision, for even Moses' merit had not suspended the punishment or threat for a moment.<sup>94</sup> As to sins, he also was trying to find out

<sup>91</sup> Sifre Num., § 139; v. also Sifre Deut., § 344 anonym; v. above, p. 54, n. 68.

<sup>92</sup> b. Synh. 108 a.

<sup>93</sup> Gen. r., ch. 55. 16; Deut. r. 2. 4; Tanh., II, p. 9; Exod. r. 2. 6, anonym.; v. Hananja ben Akabja, Mech. 55 B.

<sup>94</sup> Mech. 58 a; M. Ned. 31 a, b. שלא נחלה זכות למשה.

the sins of people of whom chastisement and death is reported in the Bible. One instance was given above, another instance is the case of Elimelech (Ruth 1. 2) and his children. They died because they ought to have prayed to God for their contemporaries which they did not do, and not, as *R. Simon ben Jochai* suggested, because they left the Holy Land.<sup>95</sup> It is noteworthy that in the Agadah of the school of *R. Ishmael* our doctrine was not elaborated and is omitted in the teachings of the chief exponents of that school, Jonathan and Josiah, although we had to indicate some references as to our doctrine in the name of the head of this school.<sup>95a</sup> There are very few references to our doctrine in the Agadah of the sons of the great teachers of the post-Hadrianic period. Their Agadah is altogether poor compared with that of their teachers and parents. The son of Simon ben Jochai, *Eleazar*, has two statements on our subject. *R. Simon ben Jochai* held that the merits of the righteous last even after their death. His son *Eleazar* agreed with *R. Jose ben Halaftha*, who taught: 'As long as the just men are alive blessing comes (for their merit) to the world, as soon as they are removed, the blessing departs.' *R. Eleazar* held further that the world was created for the merit of the righteous.<sup>96</sup> He also took part in the discussion of the question: for whose sin do little children die? His view was for the sin of the parents, who do not keep their vows.<sup>97</sup> Of *R. Jose ben Halaftha's* sons, we have to mention first of all *Ishmael*, who asked of, or was asked by *R. Judah* the patriarch, for what merit do the Babylonians live? 'For the merit of the study of the Torah,' was the answer. The Palestinians? 'For the merit of the tithes.' Israel in the Diaspora? 'For the merit of honouring the Sabbath and Festivals.'<sup>98</sup> The merits of the Torah, of tithe, and of

<sup>95</sup> b. B.B. 91 B.<sup>95a</sup> v. p. 11, n. 40.<sup>96</sup> Sifre Deut., § 38.<sup>97</sup> b. Sabb. 32 B.<sup>98</sup> Gen. r. 11. 3, ed. Theodor, p. 41; Pes. r. 119 B; b. Sabb. 119 a, Rabbi is the questioner.

the Sabbath observance are here especially emphasized as life-spending forces. His brother *Menachem* taught that the merit of the Torah is greater than the merit of the observances. The latter protects only in this life and temporarily, the former for ever.<sup>99</sup> We see that Menachem agreed with R. Simon ben Jochai who, in opposition to R. Jose ben Halafta, the father of our author, held that the merits are in force even after the death of him who obtained them. A third son of R. Jose, *Eleazar*, repeats and varies the saying of R. Eliezer ben Jacob. 'Charity and lovingkindness bring peace and are Israel's defenders.'<sup>100</sup> The son of R. Judah ben Ilai, *R. Jose*, taught that the well in the wilderness was given for the sake of Miriam, the cloud for the merit of Aaron, and the Manna for the merit of Moses. After their death these three gifts ceased also.<sup>101</sup> R. Jose sided with R. Jose ben Halafta and R. Eleazar ben Simon, and gave a special instance for their doctrine that the merits of the righteous are effective only in their lifetime and not after their death. The problem which agitated the minds of these teachers, and through them perhaps their contemporaries, might have been whether the merits work in this world or also in the world to come? Whether the good man spreads blessing only in his lifetime, or even after his death? They based their views on the teaching formulated by Simon ben Jochai and Jose ben Halafta. Finally we have to mention *Hananja ben Akasja*, whose date cannot be settled, who taught certainly for apologetical reasons, that God gave the observances to Israel to enable them to acquire merit. *R. Simon ben Eleazar* taught: 'Hast thou ever seen a beast or bird getting its food by any occupation? And still they get their daily food without trouble. And behold they were created to serve me, and I was created to serve my creator, should I not get my daily bread without

<sup>99</sup> b. Sotah, 21 a.

<sup>100</sup> b. B.B. 10 a; Tos. Pea. 24, l. 30 f, v. p. 571.

<sup>101</sup> Tos. Sotah, 315. 23 f.; b. Taanit, 99; anonym. Seder Olam r., ch. 10.

trouble (or pain)? Yet I have spoilt my works and lost my sustenance.'<sup>102</sup> He held that the creation was for the sake of man. The same argument is used by *R. Simon ben Menassja* in order to prove that the heel of Adam was more brilliant than the sun. For God created him (Adam) for His service, and the sun for the service of man, how much more so that the Master shall be greater than the servant.<sup>103</sup> *R. Nathan* dealt with the question: 'For whose merit were the Israelites redeemed from Egypt?' His theory was, for the merits of the pious women.<sup>104</sup> Just as in the case of imputed merits, he attributes the death of women to the vows of their husbands, which they have not fulfilled, to transmitted sins.<sup>105</sup> *R. Judah I* pointed out the merits of Torah, of tithes, and of the Sabbath in his dialogue with Ishmael ben R. Jose. He also taught that the nations are guarded by God for the sake of Israel.<sup>106</sup> As to the doctrine of subsidiary sin, we find first of all his view that little children perish for the unpaid vows of their parents,<sup>107</sup> and that calamities come into the world for the sins of the Amê Haarez.<sup>108</sup>

Before finishing with the Tannaitic Agadah, we must refer to the views of the teachers who may be regarded as colleagues and friends of the last-named Patriarch. First of all we have to mention *Bar Kappara*, who dealt with the same question which engaged the attention of his contemporary, *R. Nathan*, and that of older Tannaïtes. What were Israel's merits to be redeemed? He mentions four merits. They did not change their names and their language, they did not use evil language, and they were

<sup>102</sup> M. Kid. 82 a; Tos. Kid. 343. 13.

<sup>103</sup> R. Levi in his name, Pes., p. 36 B-37 A; Lev. r. 20. 2; Pes. r., p. 62 a; Eccles. r. to S. 1; Tanh. III, p. 57.

<sup>104</sup> Mech. 5 a, 19 B; Lev. r. 32. 5; Cant. r. 4. 12; Jellinek, בית המדרש, 94; Pes. 83 a.

<sup>105</sup> b. Sabb. 32 B; Tos. 112. 18.

<sup>106</sup> Sifre Deut., § 40.

<sup>107</sup> b. Sabb. 32 B.

<sup>108</sup> b. B.B. 8 a.

chaste.<sup>109</sup> He teaches further that parents enjoy the merits of their children (v. p. 161), that the wicked get their reward in this world so that they shall have no claim in the world to come. He also informs us that he who mourns over the fate or death of a righteous man, his tears are preserved in the heavenly treasures.<sup>110</sup> Secondly we refer to *Hijja*, whose merits and those of his sons were embellished by many legends long after their death,<sup>111</sup> and were discussed by two of his prominent contemporaries, i. e. R. Ishmael ben Jose and R. Judah I.<sup>112</sup> Of his own teaching referring to this doctrine mention has to be made, first of all of his view, shared also by *R. Simon ben Halaftha*, that the world was not created for man's but for Heaven's sake.<sup>113</sup> Maybe Simon ben Halaftha was led to this view by his close observations of the state of piety in his time. He informs us: 'Since hypocrisy increased, judgements became perverted, works spoilt, and no one can say: "My works are greater than thy works".'<sup>114</sup> Man's merits are so little, so small, that creation for his sake cannot be imagined. Yet he taught that the redemption from Egypt was for the merit of circumcision (v. p. 144, n. 101). Another teacher of this circle was *R. Simai*, who speaks of Jethro's merits which were enjoyed by his descendants. Jethro, together with Balaam and Job, were Pharaoh's counsellors at the time when the fate of the Israelites was discussed.<sup>115</sup> Jethro fled so that he should have no share in the persecutions, for this merit his grandchildren were sitting among the members of the Synhedrion.<sup>116</sup> The same thought is to be found in his teaching that God showed mercy to Israel in the wilderness, supplied and protected them as a reward for Abraham's

<sup>109</sup> Mech. 5 a; Pes. B. 83 B; Lev. r. 32. 5; Cant. r. 4. 12; Exod. r. 1. 33. *R. Huna* in his name, M. Ps., p. 472; Tanh. IV, p. 145; Num. r. ch. 20.

<sup>110</sup> b. Sabb. 105 B.

<sup>111</sup> b. Hullin, 86 a.

<sup>112</sup> b. Ket. 103 B; b. B.M. 85 B.

<sup>113</sup> Pes. 98 B; Tanh. B. IV, p. 24.

<sup>114</sup> b. Sota, 41 B.

<sup>115</sup> Exod. r. 1. 12.

<sup>116</sup> b. Sotah, 11 a; b. Synh. 106 a.



hospitality.<sup>117</sup> *R. Benaah* had taught that the merit which caused the creation was the Torah (v. p. 129). The miracles at the sea happened for the merit of Abraham.<sup>118</sup> *R. Acha* held that the latter was for the merit of Moses,<sup>119</sup> and consequently might have directed his view against the former view. *R. Benaah* seems to have got impatient with the doctrines of his contemporaries, who sought for the reasons of every punishment. He makes Saul (1 Sam. 15. 5) say: 'If man sinned, what was the sin of the cattle?' A heavenly voice answered, saying: 'Do not try to be more just than thy creator!' <sup>120</sup> This teaches that it is not our duty to criticize God's ways and methods. Finally we have to mention *Eleazar b. Achvai*, who repeats *R. Akiba's* saying that God spoke with Moses for Israel's sake,<sup>121</sup> and to *R. Gamaliel III's* opinion that the merit of the fathers help those who work faithfully for the welfare of the community.<sup>122</sup>

(3) Before proceeding to review the teaching of the Palestinian Amoraim about our doctrine, the following facts must be emphasized. We see first of all that the difference of opinions between *Shemaiah* and *Abtaljon* obtained up to the end of the period we reached in our description. More than half a dozen scribes can be put on one side, and nearly a dozen on the other side. Some held that man's own deed and work and God's help are needed for salvation, others believed in imputed merits, and relied on the virtues of others. Greater in number might be the opinions of those who made a compromise between these different schools of thought. They saw the dangers and shortcomings of both extreme views. To those who looked always and everywhere to the deeds of others, they

<sup>117</sup> Gen. r. 48. 10; Tanh. B. I, p. 86 f.; Eccles. r. 11. 4; Pes. r. 57 a; Toa. Sota, 4. 1-6; Mech. 25 a; Pirke, ch. 29; M. Ps. 104; Elia r., ch. 27.

<sup>118</sup> Mech. 29 B; Exod. r. 24; Eccles. r. 10. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Mech. 29 B.

<sup>120</sup> Eccles. 7. 16; v. Eccles. r. 7. 31 and M. Eccles. z., p. 114.

<sup>121</sup> Sifra, p. 4 B.

<sup>122</sup> Aboth, II, 2-4.

said: 'If you are not doing good works for yourself what can man do for himself? How can his own belief or work suffice without external support?' It is therefore not at all so sure that Rabbinical theology adopted the doctrine of imputed merit. Shemaiah, who may be regarded as the first teacher of this doctrine, had many followers. We saw among them Eleazar of Modiim, Eleazar ben Azariah, Eleazar ben Judah of Bartota, R. Benaah, Simon of קטרון, Jose ben Kisma, Judah ben Ilai, Eleazar ben Shamua, and finally Eliezer ben Jacob. Abtaljon's view was taken up by Joshua ben Hananja, the school of R. Ishmael (if our sources are reliable), Tarphon, Simon of Teman, Matja ben Heresh, Nehemia, Nathan, and Bar Kappara. Others, like Akiba, seemed to have accepted Hillel's compromise. A side issue of this third conception was, whether the merits of the righteous cease to work for others with one's death or not? This question was especially dealt with by Simon ben Jochai and Jose ben Halafta on the one side, and by their sons and pupils on the other side. Whilst we see the teachers divided on the problem of imputed virtue, they seem to be unanimous, with the exception of R. Benaah, as to the doctrine of imputed sin.

The merits are personal and objective. To the first class we reckon those of the fathers generally, namely, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Besides, there are the merits of individuals who were righteous and just. The wicked, who acquire merits, get their reward in this world. Some of them partake of the merits of their children. Further, great also was the merit of pious women. Stress is laid on the merits of faith, charity, hospitality, the circumcision, Sabbath and festivals, the study of the Torah, repentance, the Holy Land, the Tabernacle, Jerusalem, the tithe, and the observances in general. Some of these reflect immediately, at first sight, the special cares and troubles, needs and views of their time. Finally, we meet the merit of Israel. It is to be noticed that some

of these merits, e.g. of the merits of the fathers or of Israel, have not yet developed in this period to the height and importance which they will occupy in the age of the Amoraim. The historical reasons for this development must be left for later discussion, here it must suffice to establish the fact.

The second impression we gather from our review is that everything, fortune, misfortune, good or evil, is caused by a merit or by a sin. What merit was there for the creation and existence of the world? The answers can be divided into three groups. God created the world for His name's sake. The second view is, for the merit of the Torah. And the third for man's sake. The first teaching may be regarded as the oldest. God created this world for His own sake, in order that people shall serve and worship Him. Of course, the objection was raised, does God need the services even of the most pious or righteous? Equally may it be said that this view coincides with the next theory, which sees in man the purpose and meaning of the creation. Even this view was not admitted by many thinkers, as will be seen, and then as now they rejected the assumption that the universe and all that it contains was created for the sake of man. Of greater influence upon religious thought of the coming generations was the third opinion which saw in the Torah the aim and climax of creation. The first view is represented by Simon ben Azzai, Judah ben Ilai, Hijja, and Simon ben Halafta. The second opinion found its teachers in R. Meir and Benaah. And finally the last in Simon ben Zoma, Joshua ben Korha, Simon ben Eleazar, and Simon ben Menassja.

The third significant point in the teachings of the scribes of this period is their view about the share in future life, and their idea of the heavenly treasures.

(4) The period of the Amoraim opens with the name of *R. Hanina ben Hama*, the great teacher of Sepphoris. There are two of his sayings which throw light upon his

views on the merit of the fathers. 'First of all', he says, 'if a man is elevated to a dignity, then it is a merit for him as well as for all his descendants,' i. e. his children share his merits. 'Yet when this chain is interrupted or broken, it is on account of pride or haughtiness.'<sup>123</sup> He recognizes the value of the Zechuth Aboth in another of his sayings. Yet he gives the preference to the merit of the sacrifices. There may be a good reason for this. People surely asked, 'Why did Moses not try to achieve pardon for Israel, after the deed of the golden calf, by sacrifices?' The latter must be therefore valueless. R. Hanina says: 'Had Moses known then how the sacrifices are appreciated by God, he surely would have sacrificed all the cattle he could have secured, yet he appealed to the merits of the fathers.'<sup>124</sup> He points out with great emphasis the merit of Abraham. The ships which sailed on the Mediterranean and had a successful voyage, escaped for the merit of Abraham.<sup>125</sup> Further, he teaches imputed merits in a legend when he describes the objections of the angels to the creation of man. God shows them the deeds of the righteous, for whose sake Adam was created, concealing the works of the wicked.<sup>126</sup> Besides the merits of the fathers and of the children, there is preserved by him through *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* a remarkable saying on the merits of the just, who protect their contemporaries by their virtues. 'When a righteous man dies, he is lost to his fellow man. Like a pearl lost by the owner. The pearl remains a pearl, wherever it is, but the owner feels the loss. So the value of the just man remains even if he ceases to protect his surrounding.'<sup>127</sup> Noah had very little, just an ounce of merits, still he was saved by the grace of God.<sup>128</sup> Merits are accordingly neither weighed

<sup>123</sup> b. Zeb. 102 a; b. Meg. 13 B. *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* is his name.

<sup>124</sup> Cant. r. 1. 9.

<sup>125</sup> Gen. r. 39. 17, ed. Theodor, p. 376.

<sup>126</sup> Gen. r. 8. 4, ed. Theodor, p. 60; Pes. r., p. 166 B, has a different version, which was known to R. Berechjah.

<sup>127</sup> b. Meg. 15 a.

<sup>128</sup> Gen. r. 29. 1; v. Tanh. I., p. 38.

nor measured, for the slightest merit can bring salvation by the mercy of God. His older contemporary *R. Jannai* provides us with some important information on the theory of our doctrine (v. p. 17), with which is connected his conception that a man can lose a good deal of his merits by deriving too much therefrom in this world (v. p. 20). Love of God in misfortune acquires merits. *Hezekiah ben Hija* expressed beautifully the idea of Israel's solidarity with the doctrine of imputed sin. Israel is like a sheep. Just as a lamb beaten on the head or on one of its limbs feels it in all the parts of the body, likewise is it with Israel. If one of them sins, all of them feel it, i. e. are punished.<sup>129</sup> The leaders and teachers are taken away on account of the sins of the generation, Israel is one and undivided. If one sinned, the whole community has to suffer. *R. Hanina ben Hama* dealt with the same problem, when he said: 'The leaders of Israel die, because they did not prevent the evil done by their fellow men.'<sup>130</sup> They may have had in mind some especial event, of which they were eye-witnesses, unknown to us. This assumption finds confirmation in the Agadah of a third teacher, who lived in the same days and dealt with the problem on three different occasions. In a refutation of *R. Hanina ben Hama*, who suggested that Adam ought to have lived for ever, and the reason for whose death was because God foresaw that Nebuchadnezzar and Hiram would declare themselves gods—for this imputed sin Adam died—*R. Jonathan ben Eliezer* says: 'Then the wicked shall die, and the righteous live for ever! Yet, the reason for the death of the righteous is, lest the wicked will repent in a hypocritical way and say: "Wherefore do the righteous live?" For they perform the commandments and good deeds, we will do the same but it will not be for the sake of God.'<sup>131</sup> In another passage he says: 'The righteous do not die for their deeds,' i. e. because their deeds make

<sup>129</sup> Lev. r. 4. 6.

<sup>130</sup> b. Sabb. 54 b.

<sup>131</sup> Gen. r. 9. 6, ed. Theodor, p. 70.

them liable to death, 'but for the words of My mouth', i. e. God's decrees.<sup>132</sup> And thirdly: 'Chastisement comes to the world on account of the wicked, but the righteous are taken away first.'<sup>133</sup> It is not improbable, and too adventurous to suggest, that we hear here echoes of the time of the great plague which claimed so many victims in Sepphoris in the days of these teachers.<sup>134</sup> R. Jonathan ben Eliezer raised also his voice against the misrepresentation of the doctrine of the merit of the fathers by unworthy children of worthy parents.<sup>135</sup> He was aware, as Hillel before his time, that the one-sided application of this doctrine is apt to be falsified and abused. Greater stress is laid by him upon the merits acquired by the good and righteous man himself. He who teaches the son of an Am ha-Arez Torah has got the merit and power to induce God to revoke His decrees.<sup>136</sup> If we paraphrase this somewhat hyperbolic phrase, we gather that there is nothing which such a good man cannot achieve for his fellow men with God. The chief merit pointed out by R. Jonathan ben Eliezer is: the merit of observances.<sup>137</sup> He emphasizes further the merits of chastity,<sup>138</sup> and pure family life,<sup>139</sup> which may be regarded as a benevolent warning against the corruption and immorality unfortunately prevailing in his time.<sup>140</sup> Only two sayings of the next Agadist of *R. Hoshaja* need be mentioned here. R. Hoshaja who lived in Caesarea, one of the important centres of Christianity in the East, the seat of Origen, said, certainly in refuting the argument of Christian Theology, that God had never

<sup>132</sup> b. Taan. 5 B, R. Samuel b. Nahman in his name.

<sup>133</sup> b. B. K. 60 a.

<sup>134</sup> v. pal. Taan., p. 66 c, also Graetz, *Geschichte*, IV, 4th ed., p. 233, and Büchler, *The Jewish Community of Sepphoris*, pp. 47, 53.

<sup>135</sup> b. Sabb. 89 B.

<sup>136</sup> b. B. M. 85 a.

<sup>137</sup> b. Sotah, 3 B; b. A. Z. 5 a, in the same sense as taught above by R. Eliezer ben Jacob, v. p. 57, and by Eleazar ben Jose, v. p. 61.

<sup>138</sup> b. Meg. 10 b; Sotah, 10 b.

<sup>139</sup> Erubin, 100 B; Pes. 72 B; Ned. 20 B.

<sup>140</sup> v. esp. Büchler, *The Jewish Community in Sepphoris*, p. 46, f. 53 and 57.

pardoned the sin of the golden calf, God had forgiven Israel for the merit of receiving the Ten Commandments upon themselves.<sup>141</sup> None of the nations who were offered the Torah—a general view in Jewish theology—accepted it but Israel, and now the very same nations claim to be the true Israel, on account of Israel's sin. Israel's ready acceptance of the Torah balances that sin. In comparing the two Kings Achaz and Menasseh, R. Hoshaja repeats the doctrine of the merits of the children. Menasseh has no share in future life, although his father (Hezekiah) was righteous, yet his son was wicked. Ahaz, however, has a share in future life, because his father as well as his son (Hezekiah) were righteous.<sup>142</sup> This teacher also inclined to minimize the merit of the fathers and to give preference to that of the children. The next Agadist, *R. Jose ben Zimra*, leads us back to Hillel's view of the relation between man's own merits and those of his fathers. He who depends on his own merits and prays is heard for the merits of his fathers. He, however, who depends on the merits of his fathers will be heard for his own merits. As examples Moses and Solomon are given.<sup>143</sup> From Jose ben Zimra we hear also that God did not reveal Himself unto Abraham so long as Lot stayed with him.<sup>144</sup> The sins of Lot made Abraham unfit for the revelation of God. It can be noticed again, as we saw in previous cases, that teachers who accepted the doctrine of imputed sin without reservation are not reconciled to a one-sided interpretation of the ideas of imputed virtues. *R. Simon ben Jehozadak* leads us to an entirely different side of our doctrine by emphasizing the sociological meaning of it.

<sup>141</sup> Based on לחן in Isa. 49. 15 and Exod. 32. 4. Pes. 133 B, *R. Huna* gives the same homily in the name of *R. Acha*. *R. Hoshaja's* is given by *R. Eleazar b. Pedath*; b. Ber. 32 B.

<sup>142</sup> j. Synh. 27 d; Lev. r. 36. 3.

<sup>143</sup> b. Ber. 10 B, v. Pes. 167 B in the name of *R. Alexander*, later p. 73 and above, p. 18, note 61.

<sup>144</sup> Tanh., I, p. 157; Pes. r. 10 a; Gen. r. 41. 11, the same saying by *R. Nehemia*.

God creates bands and societies of people. If one of the circle dies, let the whole circle feel the loss. If one of the society departs from life, the whole society trembles.<sup>145</sup> One member of the community is responsible for the other. There is a solidarity of mankind not only in the material, but also in the moral sense of the word.

One of the most fruitful Agadists of this period was *R. Joshua ben Levi*. His Agadah is rich in quality as well as in quantity as to information on our subject, and a different treatment from the previous teachers and their views seems necessary. He himself was supposed to have had especial merits, and we are told that in years of dearth his prayers for the community were most successful in bringing about rain. He was, however, only successful in his own place (Lydda), and even his prayer was not granted in another place (Sepphoris), where the merits of the community were very insignificant.<sup>146</sup> These rabbis, who were neither Cagliostros nor priests with 'keys' of heaven and earth, knew that their supplications were heard, when the merits of those for whom they entreated Heaven deserve it. They were merely the mouthpiece of the community. There must have been a special reason for Joshua ben Levi and his contemporaries to introduce a discussion on the question, 'whether the merits of the fathers ceased to operate, and to influence the fate of the Jewish people or not'. And if it ceased, when did it do so? We have three reports of this controversy, and in all of them R. Joshua ben Levi expresses the view that the merit of the fathers was effective till the time of Elijah, and not later.<sup>147</sup> It is not clear whether we have a purely academic dispute to deal with, or whether it originated in the apologetical tendency of the time, perhaps as a reply to curious inquirers. Why does the merit of the fathers not help you? Why could they not prevent the

<sup>145</sup> Ruth r. 2. 8; *R. Jochanan* in his name.

<sup>146</sup> v. j. Taan. 66 c; b. Taan. 25 a; Büchler, l. c., p. 37. 2.

<sup>147</sup> j. Synh. 27 d; Lev. r. 36. 5; b. Sabb. 55 a; Eccles. r. 12. 8.



destruction of your Temple? The devastation of your land? Your exile and national catastrophe? Before the time of Elijah, R. Joshua ben Levi sees in many events of ancient history the work of Zechuth Aboth. He seems to have been teaching very often and in various forms that God pardoned Israel's sin in the wilderness for the merits of the fathers.<sup>148</sup> This doctrine may account for his opinion that Heman (1 Chron. 25. 5) was blessed with so many children, for the merit of Hannah, who called God צבאות " 'The Lord of Hosts' ".<sup>149</sup> Yet the redemption from Egypt he ascribes to the merit of erecting the Tabernacle. They were released from Egypt on the condition that Israel would erect the Tabernacle.<sup>150</sup> All the blessing which comes to the world, whether to Jews or to Gentiles, is due to the merit of the Tabernacle or Temple. After the destruction of the Temple this merit was transferred to the people of Israel.<sup>150a</sup> The same idea is to be found, perhaps, in his statement that the world cannot exist without Israel.<sup>151</sup> Original in his Agadah is the teaching that the Gentiles are also punished for the sins of Israel. Not merely for those which Israel commits through the violence of the Gentiles, but even for those done independently.<sup>152</sup> This sage proclaimed in modest words a teaching, the understanding of which alone can bring blessing and happiness to mankind, and the neglect of which was the cause of woe and tragedies in the history of the world. He applies the thoughts of solidarity in the community, not to one race, but to the whole world. Just as a man with a diseased limb, or a society of nations with an organic disease cannot prosper, likewise a band of nations suffers from the sins of individual nations or individual

<sup>148</sup> Eccles. r. to 4. 5; Exod. r. 44. 7, 8. *R. Zebida* in his name.

<sup>149</sup> *M. Sam.*, p. 49.

<sup>150</sup> *M. Ps.*, p. 473; *Pes. r.* 18 B; *Tanh. f.* 204 B, *Num. r.*, ch. 12.

<sup>150a</sup> *Lev. r.* 1. 11; *Tanh. IV*, p. 5; *Num. r.* 1. 3.

<sup>151</sup> *b. Taan.* 3 B; cf. *b. A. z.* 10 B.

<sup>152</sup> *Tanh. III*, p. 109.

members. R. Joshua ben Levi repeats in a new form the well-known and popular view that children die for the sins of their parents. 'Tear your garments', he preached on a solemn occasion, 'in repentance (Joel 2. 13), then you need not tear them at the death of your sons and daughters.'<sup>153</sup> We have a third passage where R. Joshua ben Levi revealed his opinion on this problem. With reference to Lev. 20. 16 he raises the question: Supposing man sinned, what has the beast done? Because the sin was committed through it (by means of it), therefore it shall be stoned.<sup>154</sup> And lastly, his teaching that the pious and righteous are judged according to the deeds, good or evil, of the majority.<sup>155</sup>

R. Joshua ben Levi deals with other merits too: (1) of the merit of the study and teaching the Torah,<sup>156</sup> and (2) of the merit of the observances;<sup>157</sup> (3) of the merit of Omer.<sup>158</sup>

Finally, we have to refer to R. Joshua ben Levi's endeavours to establish the number of the righteous.<sup>159</sup> His contemporary, *R. Alexander*, derived the number of righteous from the numerical value of יהיה (Gen. 18. 18).<sup>159a</sup> This same teacher elaborated also the aspect of our doctrine we quoted in the name of *R. Jose ben Zimra* (p. 70, above). He exemplified by two different parables the meaning of

<sup>153</sup> j. Taan. 65 B; Pes., p. 161 B.

<sup>154</sup> Gen. r., 15. 8, ed. Theodor, p. 141; Pes., p. 142 B; *R. Berechja* and *R. Simon* in his name.

<sup>155</sup> pal. Taan. 66 c; Jacob b. Idi in his name.

<sup>156</sup> Pes., p. 25 B; b. Mak. 10 a; M. Ps., p. 508. Ct. r. 6. 17, esp. the support of the students of the Torah.

<sup>157</sup> b. A. Z. 4 B. All observances which Jews perform in this world will testify for them in the world to come.

<sup>158</sup> Lev. r. 28. 6.; Pes. r. 92 B in the case of Gideon.

<sup>159</sup> He explained the word הנהילות, Ps. 5. 1, in the Notarikon fashion, taking each work in its numerical value, ה = 5 = 5 books of Moses; י = 50 = 50 days of Omer; ח = 8 = 8 days of circumcision; י = 10 = 10 commandments; ל = 30 = 30 pious like Abraham, without whom the world cannot exist. M. Ps., ed. B., p. 52 and j. A. Z. 40 c.

<sup>159a</sup> v. Gen. r. 49. 3, ed. Theodor, p. 500.

the teaching that he who refers to his own merits may get his request or attain his desire by the help of his father's merits, or vice versa (v. p. 18, note 61). Merits are not possessed by Jews only, they are international. With reference to Zech. 12. 9: 'And it shall come to pass in that day that *I will seek* to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem', he asks: 'I will seek. From or by whom?' i.e. how does such a word apply to God? God says: 'I will search in their books [בְּנִינֵי]. If I find a merit ascribed to them, then I will redeem them; if not, I will destroy them.'<sup>160</sup> The doctrine of merits is not confined to race and religion, to members of one country or one state, but everybody can accumulate merits.

We come now to one of the greatest teachers, and also one of the greatest men Judaism has produced. Greatness, of course, in the sense in which Judaism understands it. He was great neither as a statesman nor as a warrior, nor as an artist or linguist, but as a man of noble and great ideals, as a thinker and servant of God. It may suffice in order to prove this praise, to refer to one incident of his biography. He sacrificed, like a Jewish Socrates, his property, which was situated on the way between Sepphoris and Tiberias, in order to devote himself to study and work.<sup>161</sup> And later on, when necessity and want drove him to seek his daily bread, he returns to his school, following the voice of his heart.<sup>162</sup> That happened at a time when philosophers and teachers in the civilized world were still looked upon in a way that was so admirably described by Lucian, the Epicurean of the second century. The first problem which occupied this man's thoughts was: 'For whose sake does the world exist?' Many opinions are related to *R. Jochanan b. Nappacha* on this question. In one place we read: 'Even for *one* righteous person does

<sup>160</sup> b. A. Z. 4 a, v. Buber's *Pesikta*, p. 81 a, note ב"ט.

<sup>161</sup> Pes. 178 B; Lev. r. 30; Cant. r. 8. 7; Tanh. II, p. 119.

<sup>162</sup> b. Taan. 21 a.

the world exist.' <sup>163</sup> In another passage we hear: 'For the merit [בצדקה used here in the sense of בנכות, v. p. 11] that you received the Torah on Mount Sinai does the world exist. Had you not received it, I had destroyed the whole universe.' <sup>164</sup> He also took part in the discussion: When did the merits of the fathers cease? We have no saying of his referring to the merits of the fathers generally. Yet he has a great deal to say about their merits individually. Of Abraham's merits he speaks in two instances. First of all in a legend, given by *R. Keruspadai* in his name, making Balaam advise Amalek to fight Israel. 'For', the false prophet says, 'if you fight them, or go to war with them, you must certainly defeat them, because they trust in the merit of Abraham. You are also descendants of Abraham, do the same, depend on the merit of Abraham.' <sup>165</sup> The scribe ridiculed perhaps those extremists who believed in the merits of the fathers as in charms or magic, and meant: 'If one can be saved by the merits of others, then Amalek had the same claims as Israel.' That was, however, not *R. Jochanan's* intention. Moreover, he held that some benefits derived from the great stock of merits held by Abraham brought good to his surroundings too. <sup>165a</sup> This can be shown from another Agadah. The daughters of Lot committed a great sin. How is it that their unnatural deed took a natural course? *R. Jochanan's* answer is: 'It was for the sake of him who is the father of the nations.' <sup>166</sup> Next to the merit of Abraham he points out that of Isaac. It is remarkable that the

<sup>163</sup> b. Joma, 38 B. *R. Hijja b. Abba* in his name.

<sup>164</sup> *M. Ps.*, p. 174 with *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* and *R. Phinehas*, perhaps *b. Hama*, v. also *Ruth r.*, Introd. 1, a similar saying to *Ps. 76. 9* by *R. Jochanan*, in his name, by *Hijja b. Abba*, 'The earth trembled in fear, lest Israel would not receive the Torah, then it would return to water', i. e. to nothing, *Pes. r.*, p. 99 B.

<sup>165</sup> *Esther r.* 7, p. 22 a.

<sup>165a</sup> v. *M. Cant. r.*, p. 18.

<sup>166</sup> מֵיָאֵב = מֵיָאֵב *Gen. r.* 51. 14, *R. Judah ben Simon* and *R. Hanin* in his name. To the interchange between י and י in the Agadah, v. also *Gen. r.* 23. 11; 42. 4; 56. 7.

merits of the second Patriarch do not figure in the same degree in our doctrine as that of the other two. Individually his (Isaac's) merits are seldom alluded to. The reason of this will appear later on. R. Jochanan, however, puts the following prayer in the mouth of Abraham after the sacrifice—a piece which may have been used in the Liturgy of the New Year's service in the third century in Palestine. Abraham said before God: 'Lord of the whole world, when thou didst tell me to sacrifice my son Iaaac, I had something to reply (to argue). Yet I did not do so, I subdued my inclination, and did Thy will. May it be Thy will, O Lord my God, when the children of Isaac fall into trouble, and they have no one to plead their case, mayest Thou be their defender. Mayest Thou remember the sacrifice of Isaac, their father, and be merciful to them.'<sup>167</sup> When Israel passes through a time of distress and visitation, on account of sins, or when Israel is being judged, the sacrifice of Isaac appears as Israel's defender and advocate. As to the merit of Jacob, we read that Israel crossed the Jordan for his merits. This theory he supports by passages taken from the three parts of the Bible.<sup>168</sup> The existence of the world is ascribed to the merit of Moses and Aaron, if we may trust certain readings in the Talmudic text.<sup>169</sup> He repeats the teaching that the well accompanied Israel for the merit of Miriam.<sup>170</sup> Besides the merits of these biblical personages, he also

<sup>167</sup> j. Taan. 65 D, *R. Bibi b. R. Abba*, in his name Gen. r. 56. 15; Lev. r. 29. 8 with additions, anonym.; Tanh. I, p. 115; Pes., p. 145 where the name of the teacher is given as *R. Bibi b. R. Abba*; somewhat different Pes. r. 171 B. *R. Jeremiah* is a copyist's error for *R. Jochanan*. Jer. and Tanh. read לִידי עֲבִירוֹת וּמַעֲשִׂים רַעִים, Gen. r., Lev. r., Pes. לִידי עֲבִירוֹת וּמַעֲשִׂים רַעִים.

<sup>168</sup> Gen. 32. 11; Joshua 4. 22; and Ps. 114. 7, v. Gen. r. 76. 4, *R. Judah b. Simon* in his name. In all the three instances the name Jacob or Israel is used, Cant. r. 4. 6.

<sup>169</sup> b. Hulin, 89 a, there seems to have been copies in which the name of the teacher was *Raba the Babylonian school-head*. Even if we keep the first reading, there is no great difficulty in reconciling it with the view cited at the beginning of our review of *R. Jochanan's Agadah*, v. p. 74 f.

<sup>170</sup> v. above under *Jose ben Judah*, p. 61; Cant. r. 4. 26.

speaks of God's grace. Wherever the word לולי is mentioned, help and salvation come for the merit of holiness of the Name, i. e. for God's own sake.<sup>171</sup> In some cases man is justified or a whole nation is saved by the grace of God, without any outside help.

R. Jochanan also points out the merits of the Torah, of the circumcision, of observances and the Omer. Together with *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* he taught: 'The Torah was given in forty days, the soul of every human being is created in forty days. He who keeps the Torah has his soul guarded. He who does not keep the Torah his soul is not guarded.'<sup>172</sup> In another passage he regards a man who studies the Torah for its own sake as one who protects the whole world.<sup>173</sup> The merit of circumcision causes all the joy which Israel derives in this world.<sup>174</sup> The merits of the observances we find emphasized in the following saying of R. Jochanan, given by R. Simon ben Pazzi on Deut. 32. 35: 'Mine is vengeance and recompense at the time when their foot shall slide.' How is this to be reconciled with the might of God, that one should say: 'When their foot shall slide, I will punish them?'; but God said: 'When the observances which are customary (רגלים = הרגילות) among them shall cease, and I can find no merit for them before Me, at that time will vengeance and recompense belong to Me.'<sup>175</sup> The merit of the observances is great, their neglect brings punishment.' Like *R. Joshua ben Levi* he also puts stress on the observance of the Omer.<sup>176</sup> For

<sup>171</sup> Gen. r. 74. 10; M. Ps., p. 228, where a different interpretation is given, כל לולי בזכות הקב"ה, based on Isa. 1. 9.

<sup>172</sup> b. Men. 99 B, v. above, p. 61, under *Menachem ben Jose*.

<sup>173</sup> b. Synh. 99 B. We have the opinions of most of the contemporary teachers on this point, namely, of R. Alexander, Rab. (Babylonian) R. Simon ben Lakish, R. Eleazar ben Pedath, R. Abahu, and Rabah רבה (Babylonian).

<sup>174</sup> Cant. r. 7. 5: כל היטטין ופרנוקין שישראל מחטין ומתפרנקין בעולם, הזה בזכות מילה, v. Jalkut Machiri, Malachi, 20.

<sup>175</sup> Esther r. 1. 1, p. 6 a.

<sup>176</sup> Pes., p. 71 a; Lev. r., ch. 28. 6.

the merit of the Omer Abraham inherited the land of Canaan. There must be a good reason for emphasizing this special commandment by R. Jochanan and R. Joshua ben Levi, and later on by R. Samuel b. Nahman and R. Levi.

His view on subsidiary sin must also be mentioned. He who begins to perform a commandment, and does not complete it, causes the death of his wife and children. As an instance the case of Judah is given.<sup>177</sup> The righteous die for the sins of the wicked. David (Ps. 26. 9) and Daniel (2. 18) prayed to God that the pious should not be taken from this world for the sake of or with the wicked.<sup>178</sup> Finally we learn that the future redemption is to come through the merit of repentance.<sup>179</sup>

The friend of R. Jochanan, *R. Simon ben Lakish*, to whose *Agadah* we turn now, teaches the same view with regard to the future redemption.<sup>180</sup> He agrees further with R. Jochanan in his view that the world stands for the merits of Israel (v. p. 129), and that the world was originally created on the condition that Israel in future would receive the Torah (v. p. 72). R. Simon ben Lakish expressed this view also in a third sentence, saying in the name of *R. Judah II, the patriarch*: the world stands only through the breath (הבל) of the school-children.<sup>181</sup> He is the first teacher who taught expressly that the universe was created for Israel's sake. In a beautiful legend based on Ps. 49. 14, he composed a dialogue between God and the ecclesia of

<sup>177</sup> Tanh., I, p. 184; *R. Hija b. Abba* in his name; Gen. r. 85. 3; R. Judah ben Simon, and R. Hanin in his name. b. Sotah, 13 B gives Samuel b. Nahman as author; v. also PSEZ., ed. Friedmann, p. 45.

<sup>178</sup> M. Ps., p. 219.

<sup>179</sup> Exod. r., 25. 16. Here may be mentioned that R. Jochanan liked the antithesis of זכה and לא זכה in his *Agadah* to Ps. 80. 14, v. Lev. 33. 5; Cant. r. 3. 3; M. Ps. Pr. 182 a, v. my ed. of *Midrash Haseuroth we Yeteroth*, p. 44, note 185. The same method is applied by R. Joshua ben Levi (a) b; Synh. 28 a; j. Taan. 63 d and (b); b. Sanh. 28 a, and by R. Hanina b. Hama, Gen. r., ch. 8, v. p. 8, and by Nahman, son of R.S.b.N., Gen. r. 10. 5.

<sup>180</sup> Gen. r., 2. 5; Pes. r. 152 B.

<sup>181</sup> b. Sabb. 119 B.

Israel. The latter saying: 'A man who marries a second time does not forget and forsake his first wife; and Thou hast forgotten and forsaken me?' God says: 'Everything created was done for thy sake, and thou, sayest: Thou hast forgotten and forsaken me!' Israel: 'Since there is no forgetfulness before Thee, perhaps Thou wilt not forget the deed of the golden calf?' God replies: 'That will I forget!' Israel: 'Since there is forgetfulness before Thee, wilt Thou forget my deed on Sinai?' God says: 'I will never forget thee.'<sup>182</sup> This is a voice of the third century which reproduces the discussions which were held at that time all over the world where Christians and Jews met. Israel repeats the polemical views of the Church and God utters the replies of the Synagogue. Israel is forsaken by God and forgotten! A living body with a lifeless soul! Israel is remembered as an untrustworthy guardian of the highest ideals of Heaven. 'No', says R. Simon ben Lakish: 'God has not forgotten Israel. For Israel's sake was the world created. God has even forgotten Israel's sin.' We will see later on that R. Simon ben Lakish was the first teacher whom we know by name who spread this doctrine, and the context leaves not the shadow of a doubt for what purpose the teaching was propagated. Yet he acknowledges also the merits of the nations, for which they get their due reward.<sup>183</sup>

In his Agadah we hear further of the merit of Abraham; when Abraham obeyed the will of God, he was promised that the world shall never lack dew.<sup>184</sup> The Messiah is called (Dan. 2. 34) אבן (stone), for the sake of Jacob, i. e. he will destroy all the kingdoms of the world for Jacob's merit.<sup>185</sup> He thought a great deal of the merits of the righteous. Those unselfish righteous men who have no desire or wish for themselves, but pray and fast for the welfare of others,

<sup>182</sup> b. Ber. 32 B; v. Jalkut Machiri, Isa., p. 179.

<sup>183</sup> Gen. r. 9. 15.

<sup>184</sup> j. Ber. 9 B; j. Taan. 63 B; R. Jacob of Kefar-Hanin in his name.

<sup>185</sup> Gen. 49. 24; Tanh. II, p. 92.



are the source of blessing for the world (v. p. 18). The righteous, however, die for the sins of their contemporaries, or are taken with the wicked together in times of plague or distress.<sup>186</sup> A typical instance for the merit of righteous fathers is given in the case of Saul. Saul deserved the Kingdom for the merit of his grandfather (ancestor) who spent money to light lamps for the community. It was said that there were dark alleys from his residence to the school-house, and he provided them with the necessary lights.<sup>187</sup>

*R. Jose ben Hanina* is represented in this survey with three sayings. The one refers to the merits of the righteous, for whose sake the world is created [v. p. 120]. The second illustrates the idea that the environment of the just derives some advantage from his merits. When Jacob came to Egypt the famine was only in its second year, still it ceased at once for the merit of Jacob.<sup>188</sup> And thirdly, by his endeavour to show that God always diminishes the balance of debt, and increases that of merit.<sup>189</sup> Another important Agadist, *R. Hama b. Hanina*, of this period, has left us only a few remarks on our subject. He emphasizes, first of all, the doctrine of Zechuth Aboth. 'Just as a son of a king, who had a case to defend before his father, is told: "If thou dost desire to be acquitted in my court (judgement), appoint for thy defence that solicitor (ניקולוגים), and thou shalt be acquitted." Likewise says God to Israel: "My children, do you desire that I shall justify you in My judgement, recall before Me the merits of your fathers and I shall pardon you."'<sup>190</sup> This merit of the fathers apparently did not cease in the time of the Kings, as most of *R. Hama's* friends held, but was still effective. Thus

<sup>186</sup> v. Gen. r. 9. 7; ed. Theodor, p. 71.

<sup>187</sup> j. Sebiit, 34 d; Lev. r., ch. 9. 2.

<sup>188</sup> v. Gen. r. 89. 10; Midrash, 32 Middoth par. 10; instead of Jose b. נ"ן read Hanina.

<sup>189</sup> j. Sanh. 27 c; j. Kid. 61 d; b. R. H. 17 a; b. Arachin 8 B; Pes. 167 a; M. Ps., p. 234.

<sup>190</sup> Or, justify you, Pes. 153 B; Lev. r. 29. 6.

he expresses his views in one of his six explanations of Gen. 29. 2. He sees therein a reference to the history of Zion. The well is Zion. The three flocks of sheep, the three first kingdoms, Babel, Media, and Greece. The big stone is the merit of the fathers. As the latter removed the yoke of the former kingdoms, so it will remove that of our present oppressors, Rome. For the influence of the merit of the fathers never ceased, and will never cease to be 'a well' of hope, and a source of consolation to Israel.<sup>191</sup> There must have been some cogent reasons which induced him to oppose his contemporaries, just as they were influenced by some important factors to spread and elaborate their view. The Manna came to Israel for the merit of Sarah or Abraham.<sup>192</sup> He also held that Rome's power is due to the merits of their ancestor Esau, who obtained it by honouring Isaac.<sup>193</sup> He finally points out the merits connected with the study of the Torah,<sup>194</sup> and with the sacrifices.<sup>195</sup> As to the doctrine of subsidiary sin there is his saying: 'Adam ought not to have died at all. Wherefore was death decreed against him? Because God foresaw that Nebuchadnezzar and Hiram will arise who will declare themselves as deities!<sup>196</sup> Adam dies not for his own sin, but for the sin of some of his descendants.'

The next Agadist, of whose Agadah, as far as it concerns our doctrine, a brief account has to be given, is *R. Samuel ben Nahmani*. He revives the idea that the greatest things are done for God's grace. Thus the final salvation will come for His sake [v. p. 14 f.]. The forgiveness, when Israel made the golden calf, was for the merits of the fathers [v. p. 151 f.]. He also emphasizes the merit of Isaac. He saw, namely, in the ashes which were put on the heads of the worshippers on the fast day a remembrance of the

<sup>191</sup> Gen. r. 70. 8.

<sup>192</sup> Tanh. B., II, p. 67, v. Gen. r. 48. 13; Exod. r. 25. 5; b. B. M. 86 b.

<sup>193</sup> Gen. r. 66, 7.

<sup>194</sup> b. Ber. 16 a; Gen. r., ch. 92.

<sup>195</sup> Gen. r. 44. 17; R. Hija b. Hanina, read Hama b. Hanina.

<sup>196</sup> Gen. r. 9. 6, v. already p. 68, n. 131.

merits of Isaac, in opposition to *Judah ben Menasseh*, who thinks of the merits of Abraham.<sup>197</sup> As to the merits of Jacob we have two references. First of all that Abraham was saved for the merit of Jacob (v. p. 136), which means that the view of the merits of children is implied. In another legend he points out that for the merits of Jacob and Joseph their masters (Laban and Potiphar) were prosperous.<sup>198</sup> Just as these were blessed for the sake of the two just men, who dwelt among them, so the world is blessed for the sake of Israel (v. p. 130). The Gentiles have also got merits for which they receive their reward in this world, as, for instance, the Canaanites.<sup>199</sup> He repeats the doctrine of merit of the Tabernacle (v. above, pp. 53 and 72), which established the world on a firm basis.<sup>200</sup> Although we learnt from him that the future redemption will be for God's own sake (v. p. 14), yet we hear that the merit of the purity of family life will also contribute to it a great deal.<sup>201</sup> As in the Agadah of some of his contemporaries, there is in R. Samuel ben Nahmani's, too, a reference to the merit of the Omer.<sup>202</sup> In another saying, we have a second instance of R. Samuel ben Nahmani varying a view commonly held in his time: 'When Israel does not do the will of the God, then He selects a pious, just, righteous, God-fearing man, who is among them, and removes him for the sin of the wicked.'<sup>203</sup> *R. Simlai* ascribes immorality as the source and reason of plague and pestilence (אנדריומוסיא), which kill righteous and wicked people alike.<sup>204</sup> As a point of curiosity may be mentioned here also the defence of the nations of the world at the last judgement, in a visionary composition of this teacher, when the nations of the world

<sup>197</sup> j. Taan. 65 a; b. Taan. 16 a; Gen. r. 49. 23; cf. Lam. r., ed. B., p. 115.

<sup>198</sup> v. Gen. r. 84. 6: זה נתברך בו חמיו בשבילו זה נתברך בו חמיו בשבילו.

<sup>199</sup> Gen. r. 100. 6.

<sup>200</sup> Tanh. II, 94.

<sup>201</sup> M. Ps., p. 175.

<sup>202</sup> Pes. 71 a; Lev. r. 28. 6.

<sup>203</sup> Cant. r. 6. 6; j. Ber. 5 B. anonym.

<sup>204</sup> Gen. r. 26. 10, ed. Theodor, 278 f.; Num. r. 9. 33; j. Sotah 17 a; Tanh. I, 13 f.

pretend as if all the great things done in this world by them, all their achievement in culture and technique, were for Israel's sake, i.e. that Israel shall study the Torah in comfort.<sup>205</sup>

The following teachers are mostly the pupils of R. Jochanan ben Nappacha. Especially *R. Eleazar ben Pedath*, *R. Abahu*, *R. Ami*, *R. Hijja b. Abba*, *Simon bar Abba*, *R. Isaac*, *R. Levi*, *Simon ben Pazzi*, and *Abba b. Kahana*, whose views on the problems connected with our doctrine will be now described. *R. Eleazar ben Pedath's* Agadah may be introduced by his saying with reference to Ps. 62. 13, 'Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; For Thou renderest to every man according to his work', and who has not got (any merits) Thou givest him from Thy own.<sup>206</sup> God in His mercy pardons him who has no merits. The world was created for him who fears God.<sup>207</sup> He expresses the same view in another saying: 'Even for the sake of *one* righteous man is a world created', based on Gen. 1. 4 and Isa. 3. 10.<sup>208</sup> It is doubtful, however, whether we have to attribute to him the opinion that the world stands for the sake of the one who keeps quiet at times of quarrel and strife.<sup>209</sup> Yet we have another statement of his to the effect that the world stands for the merit of the Torah.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>205</sup> b. AZ. 2a-2b.

<sup>206</sup> j. Peah. 16b: אמר ר' אלעזר ולך ה' חסד כי אתה משלם לאיש כמעשאו; ואי לית ליה את יהיב ליה מן דידך היא דעת יה דר"א, the same sentence j. Kid. 61 d; j. Synh. 27 d, v. Ginzberg, שרירי הירושלמי, p. 228, l. 34; b. R. H. 17 b.

<sup>207</sup> B. Ber. 6b to Eccles. 12. 13: 'Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole man' אמר ר' אלעזר מאי זה כל האדם? אר' אלעזר אמר, ה'קבה כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא כשביל זה v. b. Sabb. 30 b.

<sup>208</sup> b. Joma, 38b: ואמר ר' אלעזר אפי' בשביל צדיק אחד עולם נברא: שנ' וירא אלהים כי טוב ואין טוב אלא צדיק שנ' אמרו צדיק כי טוב. This identification of צדיק and טוב is older, v. R. Jannai, Gen. r. 3. 8; M. Ps., p. 323.

<sup>209</sup> b. Hul. 89a. The text reads אילעאי ר', Jalkut read Eleazar.

<sup>210</sup> b. Pes. 68b; b. Ned. 32a: דאמר ר' אלעזר גדולה תורה שאילמלא תורה לא נתקיימו שמים וארץ שנ' אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה, Jer. 33. 25.

For the merit of Abraham the Israelites were heard at Ai (Joshua 7. 6),<sup>211</sup> and the Manna was given to them in the wilderness for the same reason.<sup>212</sup> When the destruction of Jerusalem in the time of Zedekiah was imminent the members of the Synhedrion prayed and mentioned the merits of Abraham and Jacob.<sup>213</sup> Many references are to be found in R. Eleazar's Agadah to the merits of the righteous. Rain comes for the merit of the just man.<sup>214</sup> The prayers of the righteous have the power to appease God.<sup>215</sup> Blessing and happiness come to the world for the merit of Israel.<sup>216</sup> Original is his view that Israel was redeemed from Egypt for the merit of future generations. The contemporaries had no merits. Even the merits of the fathers could not hasten the hour of freedom. The same was the case with the miracle at the sea. They were redeemed for the merit of the children that they might proclaim the greatness and might of God.<sup>217</sup> This statement does not contradict another saying of his which mentions the merits of the fathers as one of the five things which bring salvation, i.e. trouble (persecutions), prayer, the merit of the fathers, repentance, and the promised time of redemption (קץ). R. Eleazar meant to say that these four requirements were wanting, therefore

<sup>211</sup> Gen. r. 39. 24, v. above under R. Eleazar ben Shamua, p. 56.

<sup>212</sup> Lev. r. 34. 8.

<sup>213</sup> מוכירין זכותו של אברהם מוכירין זכותו של יעקב, Lam. r. 2. 18, anonym, ed. B, p. 114; cf. b. Ned. 65 a in the name of R. Eleazar.

<sup>214</sup> j. Taan. 66 c: ר' ברכיה ור' חלבו פפא בשם ר' אלעזר פעמים שהגשמים יורדין בזכות אדם אחד בזכות עשב אחד בזכות שדה אחת ושלשתן בפסוק אחד וממר גשם יתן לכם לאיש עשב בשדה לאיש אבל לא לאנשים ולעשב אבל לא לעשבים ובשדה אבל לא בשדות; Zech. 10. 1; Lev. r. 35. 9 read ר' אלעזר ור' פפא ור'.

<sup>215</sup> b. Sukkah, 14 a, v. b. Jeb. 64 a; R. Isaac, v. p. 69, n. 136.

<sup>216</sup> b. Jeb. 63 a: אפילו משפחות הדרות באדמה אין מתברכות אלא בשביל ישראל, אפילו ספינות הבאות מגליא לאספמאי אין מתברכות אלא בשביל ישראל, v. above to R. Hanina b. Hama, p. 67.

<sup>217</sup> M. Ps., p. 268, ed. Buber; p. 28 d, ed. Prague; Jalkut has § 746 R. Eleazar.

the Zechuth of the fathers could not hasten the redemption, yet the merit of the children could do it.<sup>218</sup> We will mention a few sentences of his, which teach the doctrine of imputed sin. First of all his saying: 'He who forgets one thing of his learning causes exile to his children.'<sup>219</sup> Secondly, he says in a curious saying that the descendants of Abraham were caused to suffer slavery in Egypt for 210 years, because he forced the scholars to military service.<sup>220</sup> Thirdly, we have an instance of one righteous man being taken away owing to the sins of his generation.<sup>221</sup>

Another prominent pupil of R. Jochanan, a great teacher of this period, was *R. Abahu*, who has eight sayings on our doctrine. He discussed, like R. Eleazar, the question, 'for whose merit was the world created?' And expressed his opinion on the frequently debated problem, 'for whose merit does the world stand?' As to the second question he said that the world stands for the merit of Jacob (v. p. 123), as to the first, we hear that the world was created for the merit of the meek and modest people.<sup>222</sup> He revives the old doctrine of the merit of circumcision. For the sake of Abraham's circumcision God pardons Israel's sins,<sup>223</sup> and emphasizes that the Law of festivals and the Torah were given for the merits of the fathers, in order that Israel shall not come with empty hands before the Lord. Even in our time, says this great Agadist

<sup>218</sup> j. Taan. 63 d; Deut. r. 2. 21.

<sup>219</sup> Based on Hos. 4. 6; b. Joma, 38 b: כל המשבח דבר מתלמודו גורם גלות לבניו שנאמר ותשבה תורת אלהיך אשכח בניך גם אני. *R. Abahu* says that he is punished, but not his children.

<sup>220</sup> B. Ned. 32 a: מפני מה נענש אברהם אבינו ונשתעבדו בניו למצרים? ר"י שנים? מפני שעשה אנגריא בתלמידי חכמים שנאמר וירק את חניכיו v. Büchler, *The political and social leaders*, p. 42<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>221</sup> B. Ber. 62 b: א"ל הקבה למלאך המות מול לי רב שבהם שיש בו ליפרע מהם כמה חובות באותה שעה מת אבישי בן צרויה ששקול כרובה של סנהדרין.

<sup>222</sup> b. Hullin, 89 a: מי שמישים עצמו כמי שאינו שנ' מתחת זרועות עולם, he who is trodden down, he carries in his arms the world.

<sup>223</sup> Cant. r. 4. 14.

and Apologist, although we are persecuted, the Torah does not depart from us. We are like a man whose case is before the king, and his advocates defend him, likewise if a man performs the commandments, studies the Law, or does charity, even when Satan accuses him, his Torah and charity defend him.<sup>224</sup> These words were said in Caesarea, at a time when it was taught that the Torah and performances are punishments, and there is no good and value in them. Do we wonder if R. Abahu pleaded the merits of the observances? Another case of the merits of the ancestors is shown in the biography of the prophet Jeremiah; when he was rescued from the pit, he asked for a ladder. God said to him: 'You want a ladder, is there no merit in My hands belonging to thy ancestress (Rahab)? Is it not written: Then she let them down by the cord through the window (Joshua 2. 15)? Likewise did they draw up Jeremiah with the cords' (Jer. 38. 13).<sup>225</sup> He taught also about the merits of the children, for whose sake Noah was rescued.<sup>226</sup> Just as the merits of the children benefit the fathers, so the fathers die for the sins of the children. Thus the wickedness of Esau shortened the days of Abraham.<sup>227</sup> From *R. Hijja b. Abba's* Agadah we have other proofs of the interest our problems roused in contemporary Judaism. We notice first of all his prayer: 'Unite, O God, our hearts to fear Thy name, remove us from everything Thou dost hate, and bring us near to everything Thou dost love, do unto us charity for Thy name's sake.'<sup>228</sup> God does righteousness and charity for His name's sake. He forgives Israel's sin for the merits of the fathers (v. p. 151). He endorses his teacher's

<sup>224</sup> ומלמדין זכות, Exod. r. 31. 1.

<sup>225</sup> M. Sam., ed. Buber, p. 75.

<sup>226</sup> Tanh., f. 9 B. Gen. r. 29. 5 has the saying in the name of *R. Simon ben Pazzi*, v. p. 90, and ed. Theodor, p. 270.

<sup>227</sup> Pes. r. 47 B, 49 B, v. Gen. r. 63. 16, anonym.

<sup>228</sup> Pal. Ber. 7 D: ר' חייאבר אבא מוסיף: ותייחד לבבינו ליראה את שמך ותרחקנו מכל מה ששנאת, ותקרבונו לכל מה שאהבת ותעשה עמנו צדקה למען שמך.

<sup>236</sup> Gen. r. 56. 3; M. Sam., ch. 3, p. 53; in a different order Pirke, R. Eliezer, ch. 31, shortened רוממו שנ' השתחוויה ה' <sup>237</sup>אלהינו, based on Gen. 22. 3; Exod. 12. 17; Exod. 24. 1; 1 Sam. 1. 24 Isa. 27. 13; Ps. 95. 6.



of Israel in Palestine, the rebuilding of the Temple and the appearance of the Messiah will come for the merit of the festival plants.<sup>237</sup> Among the different things which depend on hope (בקייו), R. Isaac enumerates in a similar fashion the merits of the fathers.<sup>238</sup> In an explanation of Isa. 26. 10, R. Isaac makes Esau's father say: 'Lord of the whole world! Let favour be shown to Esau!' God replies: 'He is wicked.' Isaac: 'Yet will he not learn righteousness?' God: 'In the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully!' Isaac: 'Well then may he not behold the pride of the Lord?'<sup>239</sup> We have here an instance of a father, just and righteous, entreating for his wicked son. Yet he himself acknowledges God's judgement. R. Isaac repeats the opinion that for Jacob's merit was Laban blessed. The same was the case with Joseph's master.<sup>240</sup> Aaron entered the Holy of Holies for the merit of the twelve tribes.<sup>241</sup> The merit of one just man saves the city.<sup>242</sup> As in all questions bearing on the Agadah great attention must be paid here also to one of its greatest teachers, *R. Levi*, who enlarges our knowledge on this doctrine as on all other branches of Jewish theology. Some of his views are quite original, others repetition, or further development of earlier teachings. Thus when he says the world was created for Abraham's merit.<sup>243</sup> A chief feature in Levi's teachings is the great merit of Abraham. With whomsoever Abraham entered into business transactions, the buyer or seller was blessed.<sup>244</sup> The events in biblical history happened on the third day, likewise

<sup>237</sup> Lev. 23, 40, v. Gen. r. 63. 10; R. Haggai in his name; Lev. r. 30, 15; by R. Berechja, in the name of R. Levi, Pesikta 185a, the whole sentence by R. Berechja in the name of R. Abba b. Kahana.

<sup>238</sup> Gen. r. 98. 20.

<sup>239</sup> b. Meg. 6 B.

<sup>240</sup> b. Sanh. 39 B.

<sup>241</sup> Exod. r. 38. 10.

<sup>242</sup> Gen. r. 49. 25: א"ר יצחק עד כמה הוא מצוי חשבון לעיר אחת עד אחר אם נמצא אחד בכל העיר תולין לה בזכותו.

<sup>243</sup> Gen. r. 12. 2, and Gen. r. 14. 6; v. however, Gen. r. 28. 2.

<sup>244</sup> Gen. r. 39. 17: לא שם אדם פרה מאברהם עד שנתברך ולא שמה לו עד שנתברך מאברהם.

such as are destined to take place in future on this day, for instance, the resurrection, the release of the twelve patriarchs, of the spies in Joshua's time, the revelation on Mount Sinai, the miracle of Jonah, of those who returned from exile to Palestine, the salvation in the days of Esther, all take place for Abraham's merit.<sup>245</sup> We have further a dispute between R. Levi and *R. Abba b. Kahana* on the question, for whose merit does the divine presence abide in Israel? One says and proves it from the Scripture that it was for the merit of Abraham, the other speaks of the merit of Jacob.<sup>246</sup> To judge from the previous statements we may say that R. Levi ascribed it to the merit of Abraham (v. p. 136). The tribe of Judah was worthy to sacrifice as the first for the meekness of their ancestor.<sup>247</sup> Besides Abraham's merits, R. Levi speaks at length of the merits of Moses. For his and Aaron's sake Israel was redeemed from Egypt (v. p. 143), the Manna came (p. 145), Moses was buried in the wilderness so that the dead of the generation of the desert, who died there, shall revive for his merit.<sup>248</sup>

An instance of the descendants benefiting by the good deeds of their parents is given in the case of Orpah. For the four miles Orpah accompanied her mother-in-law she was worthy that four heroes were among her children.<sup>249</sup> As to the doctrine of the merits of the fathers, we hear that its influence ceased before the destruction of the Temple.<sup>250</sup> There is another frequently repeated view of

<sup>245</sup> Gen. r. 56. 1: באיזה זכות רבנן ר' לוי, רבנן אמרי בזכות יום השלישי: של מתן תורה ר' לוי אמר בזכות של יום השלישי של אברהם אבינו, from R. Isaac's instances given above, compared with this it seems that such enumerations were in the latter part of the third century usual in public lectures.

<sup>246</sup> Cant. r. 7. 11.

<sup>247</sup> Gen. 44. 33; Pes. r., p. 27 B. *B. Berechja* in his name.

<sup>248</sup> Deut. r. 2. 5: א"ל הקב"ה למשה אם אתה נקבר כאן אצלן בזכותך: הן באין עמך.

<sup>249</sup> Tanh. I, p. 208, against R. Isaac.

<sup>250</sup> v. Lam. r. Proem, 23, p. 18, ed. Buber.

R. Levi which was also taught by others who preceded him, as well as by those who followed him. 'Blessing comes', he says, 'to the world for Israel's merit.'<sup>251</sup> The different means which prepare the way for merits are numerous in R. Levi's Agadah. First of all there is the merit of *faith*. Salvation comes for the merits of faith and of the Torah.<sup>252</sup> Israel rejoices before the Lord for the merits of the Sabbath and the tithes.<sup>253</sup> Like R. Jochanan and R. Joshua ben Levi, he refers to the merit of the Omer, which helped Israel in the days of Mordecai.<sup>254</sup> The merit of circumcision is being especially emphasized. The redemption promised in Dan. 12. 1 will come for the merit of circumcision, cf. Joshua 5. 2.<sup>255</sup> For at the circumcision, in the time of Joshua, God promised to forgive Israel's sins for the performance of that commandment.<sup>256</sup> Further, we hear that God does charity with Israel for the merit of observing faithfully the civil laws.<sup>257</sup> Finally, R. Levi teaches that for the sake of the soul, i.e. for man, the world was created.<sup>258</sup> There are only a few items in the teachings of *R. Ami*. Rain comes for the merit of those who have faith.<sup>259</sup> *R. Simon bar Abba* emphasizes also the merit of faith.<sup>260</sup> *R. Simon ben Pazzi* endorses the view of the merits of the fathers and children.<sup>261</sup> As to the theory

<sup>251</sup> Gen. r. 66. 2: אומה שכל טובה שהיא באה לעולם אינה באה אלא בזכותה, הגשמים אינן יורדין אלא בזכותה. הטללים אינם יורדים אלא בזכותה שנ' ויתן לך אלהים לך בזכותך וכך הדבר תלוי, Deut. r. 7. 8: רבנן אמרי בני כל טובות שבאות בעולם בזכותכם הן באות, and v. Cant. r. 7. 1, like Gen. r. 66. 2.

<sup>252</sup> Gen. r. 74. 9.

<sup>253</sup> Pes., p. 96 B, מחטטאים; Aruch reads מתחטטין, v. above, p. 77. M. S. Carmoly adds זכות תורה.

<sup>254</sup> Pes. 71 B; Pes. r. 93 a; Lev., p. 28; Esther r. 10; b. Meg. 16 a.

<sup>255</sup> M. Ps. 19 B, ed. B., p. 175.

<sup>256</sup> Cant. r. 4. 14.

<sup>257</sup> Deut. r. 5. 6.

<sup>258</sup> Lev. r. 4. 2; Eccles. r. 7. 16.

<sup>259</sup> b. Taan. 8 a: ואין הגשמים באים אלא בזכות בעלי אמונה, and *ibid.* for the sake of the righteous.

<sup>260</sup> Exod. r. 23. 5.

<sup>261</sup> Gen. r. 29. 5, v. above under R. Abahu, p. 86.

of the merits of the fathers, we learn that the reward not used by them during their lifetime is preserved for their children.<sup>262</sup> The nations have also merits.<sup>263</sup> *R. Hanina ben Papa* taught the merits of the children, when he says that Noah escaped from the catastrophe of the flood for the merit of Moses.<sup>264</sup> In *R. Abba b. Kahana's* Agadah most of the problems concerning our doctrine are discussed. Thus he tells us that for Israel's sake the world was created (v. p. 113), the world stands for the merit of the house of David.<sup>265</sup> Further he shows, in the example of Abraham, the view of the merits of the fathers and children in a combined form (v. p. 136 f.). The latter idea is also repeated by him in another instance. Noah and his children were saved for the merits of the pious and righteous men and women in future generations.<sup>266</sup> New is the teaching in his Agadah that Israel was redeemed from Egypt for the merits of Isaiah's generation,<sup>267</sup> which comes under the same category. *R. Abba bar Kahana* emphasizes especially the doctrine of the treasures, which are kept for the righteous.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>262</sup> Lev. r. 36. 3; j. Synh. 27 d.

<sup>263</sup> Tanh., p. 101 B.

<sup>264</sup> v. Gen. r. 26. 6: אפילו נח שנשתייר מהם לא שהיה כדאי אלא בשנ' דחושבניה דדין שצפה הקב"ה שמושה עתיד לעמוד ממנו שנאמר בשנ' דחושבניה דדין ויהיו ימיו, the Rabbis derived it from Gen. 6. 3: מאה ועשרים שנה = the years of Moses.

<sup>265</sup> v. M. Sam., ch. 16, p. 94 (Buber); באיזה זכות העולם עומד? רבי, אבא בר כהנא אמר בזכות מלכי בית דוד שנ' אשר הכיניי, 1 Kings 2. 24. *R. Simon ben Lakish* says for the merit of Torah, and the Rabbis assume that for Israel's sake, cf. 2 Sam. 7. 22. *Jalkut r. R. Levi* instead of *R. Simon ben Lakish*, which reading appears more correct. There must be some reason for emphasizing the merits of the kings of the house of David! *R. Hanina ben Papa* also warned against any opposition to the house of David, v. b. Synh. 102 a. Maybe that the opposition to the Patriarch *Judah II* by the leaders of the schools induced these scribes to utter those words in defence of that institution? On this opposition v. *RÉJ.*, 67, pp. 59-66.

<sup>266</sup> Gen. r. 28. 5.

<sup>267</sup> M. Ps., p. 473.

<sup>268</sup> v. p. 21, and also Cant. r. 7. 14; M. Ps. 31. 7; Deut. r. 7. 10: אתם צפנתם לי תורה ומצות ואני צופן לכם מאותו הטוב שמתוקן לעתיד לבא.

To complete the thoughts and teachings on our subject the views of some scribes, of whom only occasional remarks on the doctrine of the merits are preserved in the old Rabbinical literature, must be added. *Zabdi ben Levi*, a contemporary of R. Joshua ben Levi, saw in the word לִילִי (except) an allusion to the merits of the fathers.<sup>269</sup> *Abba bar Zabda* expressed also his opinion in the debate on the question: 'When did the power of the merits of the fathers cease?' He found in 2 Kings 13. 23 a reference that it ceased in the days of Jehoash.<sup>270</sup> *Hilfa* or *Ilfa*, a friend of R. Jochanan remarks to Eccl. 1. 3, 'What profit hath man of all his labour under the sun', yet he has a treasure above the sun!<sup>271</sup> *Jeremia ben Abba*, a pupil of the Babylonian Rab, gives us an instance how one can lose his merits. The book of Nehemia is not called by the author's name, for he wished to call it after his own name, whereby he lost his merits.<sup>272</sup> Of R. Jochanan's contemporaries and pupils we have to remember first of all *Tahlifa of Caesarea*. 'If Lot, who had no merits, was saved for showing honour to the angels, shall I not save you, for your merits and for the merits of your fathers?'<sup>273</sup> God saved Lot for Abraham's sake, how much more will the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee (Num. 6. 26). In *R. Judah ben Simon's* Agadah we find the doctrine that the world was created for the sake of the Torah, and for Israel's sake does the world stand.<sup>274</sup> The patriarchs acquired merits by the performance of the commandments of tithe.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>269</sup> Gen. r. 74. 9.

<sup>270</sup> j. Synh. 27 d; Lev. r. 36. 5.

<sup>271</sup> Eccles. r. 1. 4. R. Huna and R. Acha in his name.

<sup>272</sup> b. Sanh. 93 B, v. on the literature my ed. of *Midrash Haseerot ve Yeteroth*, p. 83, note 343.

<sup>273</sup> Gen. r. 50. 21: א"ר חלפתא קסרייא ומה אם לוט על ידי שכיבר את המלאך נשא לו פנים לך לא אשא פנים מפניך ומפני אבותיך ישא יי פניי ומה אם ללוט נשאתי: (anonymous) Sifre Num. §. 42 reads (anonymous): פנים בשביל אברהם אוהבי לך לא אשא פנים מפניך ומפני אבותיך, v. also Num. r. 11. 7.

<sup>274</sup> Lev. r. 23. 3. R. Azarja in his name, Cant. r. 2. 6; Exod. r. 24. 4.

<sup>275</sup> Gen. r. 43. 10: מכח אותה ברכה אכלו ג' יתירות גדולות בעולם

*Judah ben Simon* took also part in the discussion: 'For whose merit did Israel cross the Jordan?' He suggests, for Joseph's sake.<sup>276</sup> *R. Josiah* repeats the doctrine of the children's merits. God has patience with the wicked in this world, for they may repent or perform the observances, so that God will repay their reward in this world, or perhaps they will bring forth righteous children, as it was in the case of Ahaz and Hezekiah, Amon and Josiah, Shimei and Mordecai.<sup>277</sup> *Acha bar Hanina* was an outspoken opponent of those people who relied on the merits of the fathers. He applies Ezek. 18. 6 to a man who is just and does that which is lawful and right, who does not avail himself of the merits of his fathers (and hath not eaten upon the mountains, i. e. the merits of the fathers מַעֲשֵׂה אֲבוֹת = הָרִים), who is meek ('hath not lifted up his eyes to the idols', idolatry and pride are identical in the eyes of the Scribes), who does not trespass the craft of his fellow man ('hath not defiled his neighbour's wife'), and who claims nothing of the poor (i. e. 'hath not come near to a woman in her impurity').<sup>278</sup> This teacher looks with contempt, as it seems, upon a man whose only merit is to be an insignificant son of a great father, an unworthy descendant of a worthy and just ancestor. It may be that some of his contemporaries were referred to. *Zeira*, one of *R. Jochanan's* circle, a Babylonian by birth, teaches us that it was then proverbial in Palestine to promote charitable work with the words: זָכִי בִי 'Acquire merits unto yourself by doing charity or good work'.<sup>279</sup> Another contemporary, *R. Samuel ben Isaac*, preserved also a Palestinian proverbial saying, which throws light upon an aspect of our doctrine: 'Shela sinned, and Jochana is punished.' The starvation which was in the days of David

אֲבִרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב בְּאֲבִרָהָם כְּתִיב וַיִּבְרַךְ אֶת אֲבִרָהָם בְּכָל בּוֹכּוֹת וַיִּתֵּן לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂר מְכֹל Gen. 24. 11; 27. 33; 33. 11.

<sup>276</sup> Gen. r. 84. 5, v. above to Simon of קַטְרוֹן, p. 47.

<sup>277</sup> Eccles. r. 7. 32.

<sup>278</sup> b. Sanh. 87 a.

<sup>279</sup> Lev. r. 34. 7.

ought to have been in the days of Saul. Yet Saul was but a branch of a Sycamore tree, i.e. too unimportant, therefore did God bring it in the days of David.<sup>280</sup> This Agadist speaks further of the merits of the children (v. p. 161).

(5) The Agadah of the Amoraim of the third century, from about 219 to 280, is the work of many great teachers. This can be seen in the unusually large number of the scribes on the one hand, and in the quality as well as in the substance of their sayings on the other hand. Some of them reached the highest possible standard of ethical teaching, some of them merely reproduced or varied ideas and teachings of previous generations. There is to be noticed only a slight echo of the dispute on the question, whether we owe our salvation and happiness and success to self-acquired merits or to vicarious virtues, which was characteristic of the Tannaitic discussions. The teachers in Sepphoris and Tiberias, at Lydda and Caesarea, recognized and repeatedly emphasized in their teachings the doctrine of the merits of the fathers, perhaps with the exception of R. Eleazar of Modiim, more strongly than in the second century. In the same manner the merits of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Joseph, of Moses and Aaron, are subjects of various and frequent exegetical and theological aspects to their mind.

Yet in this period we detect a stronger objection to the abuses to which the doctrine of vicarious virtues might or actually did lead. This accounts first of all for the greater influence of the doctrine of God's grace in contemporary theology. Secondly, this opposition appears in the outspoken censure or condemnation of those who have no virtues of their own, wilfully neglecting their duties, men who do not even try to get merits of their own, for they rely upon the treasures gathered by their ancestors. It is not difficult to see how far the old dispute between

<sup>280</sup> Gen. r. 25. 3, 40. 64; M. Sam., p. 131; Ruth r., ch. 1. 6; Pes. 113 B. Macc. 11 a has the version מוֹכִיחַ הָמָא וְיִגְדֵּר מִיִּגְדֵּר.

Shemaiah and Abtaljon was carried on with the old weapons and new arguments. Sometimes we find that the opponents are at the same time the defenders of the doctrine of vicarious merits. We see in the latter school the successors of that compromise ascribed previously to Hillel.

More developed in the Agadah of the third century is the doctrine of the merits of the children. By the piety and charity of the children, ancestors benefit in this world as well as in the world to come. There is really none so wretched who has no merits of his own. This applies, of course, first of all to Israel, as having more opportunities and means to acquire merits. But even the nations of the world have merits, either of their own or on account of their ancestors. Further, the nations derive great advantages from the merits of Israel. The origin of this conception lies in the aspect of the solidarity of mankind. There has to be solidarity in the individual himself, where merits and sins balance each other. Further, a solidarity between parents and children, members of one family, parts of a larger or smaller society, and finally between various societies, different nations and races. Just as one limb of the body when diseased causes pain to the whole body, so one sin in a man or family or nation imperils the whole body or bands of bodies, i.e. mankind. The same is the case with merits. The merits of the righteous protect even those who cannot boast of having virtues. Our merits as well as our sins are shared by our fellow men, posterity as well as by ancestors. Israel, as the bearer of God's word, has in this respect a special privilege and a higher responsibility. The latter is apparent in the great means of merits. The number of means acquiring merits is larger in this period than in the time of the Tannaim. Besides the merits of the study of the Law and of circumcision, in particular, the merits of the observances generally are more conspicuous. Other merits, like those of faith, of sacrifices, of chastity, of repentance, of tithes, are occasionally mentioned.



Vicarious sin is the counterpart of vicarious virtue. Just as the merits of the fathers influence most beneficently the life and fortunes of the children, so the sins of the fathers destroy the happiness of or bring evil to the children. The same relation is to be seen in the merits of the children and their sins respectively. Finally, we observe this relation in the advantages obtained by the environment of the righteous and just men, and in the death of the latter on account of their contemporaries' sins. Here in the effect of the sins, as there in merits, the ruling idea is: Human solidarity. One is responsible for the other for good or for evil.

We have seen that the Agadists were influenced by contemporary events in propagating or formulating their doctrines. Two outstanding events are to be pointed out here. One is of internal, the other of external character. The internal is signified by the peculiar social and economic conditions under which Jews lived in Galilee in the third century. In consequence of the abnormal political life, sacred earnestness and serious retrospect were lost, and the thirst for petty social advantages, and hunger for Mammon corrupted especially the so-called upper layers of society, who arrogated to themselves the leadership of the community. Sanctity of family life on one side, conscientious loyalty to Judaism on the other, were endangered by these changes; no wonder that most of the preachers—being good preachers—had the courage to tell their people their sins. Maybe the picture appears too dark, but there is no smoke without fire, and preachers like R. Hanina b. Hama or R. Jochanan b. Nappacha, must have well considered their reproaches, before they ascribed plague or pestilence to the sins of their communities, or held their contemporaries responsible for the death of the righteous men in their midst.

The second feature is the hostility of the outside world. The Church stood on the threshold of a world empire, on the eve of the great day when it was about to undo the

ties which had bound it to Judaism. Jewish law and religion, history and life, past and present, were the target for centuries of cruel misrepresentations, and biased accusations. The Fathers of the Church learnt all the poisonous tricks of the old apostles of hate, the Alexandrian Anti-Semites. The gospel of hate preached by the Fathers of the Church did more for the conquest of heathendom than the Gospel of Love taught by the founders of Christianity. The Greek mob was more delighted by the anti-Jewish denunciations of the teachers of the Church than by the Sermon on the Mount. This assertion sounds very strong, nevertheless it is true. In this period the old anti-Jewish polemic revived. One accusation frequently heard was—the uselessness and selfishness of the Jews. The Jews do and did nothing for humanity. Is it a matter of surprise if the Scribes tried to prove from the Scriptures that for Israel's sake the world was created, that the world exists, that blessing comes to mankind? Even stronger must have been the crusade against the observances and ceremonies. The latter were always a conscientious trouble to the Church. People were reminded of them, they take the same part of the Bible as chap. 53 of Isaiah. If the latter is to be taken literally, why not the other parts? The more or less fine theological theories and hypotheses were all very well for the academies and colleges; the plain man in the street was well aware that there was something wrong in the whole edifice. Then the leaders of the Synagogue might have been aware that the observances are the corner-stones of Judaism, despised by the builders of the new Temple. There is nothing more likely to imperil the future of Judaism than the neglect or extirpation of the observances. It is no wonder therefore that the Church Fathers do not get tired of teaching, preaching, and writing against them. They are idolatry! they are abhorred by God! they are everything else than good! Only a strong will and a firm conviction could withstand these attempts. The majority might have been

inclined to listen to the voice of the serpent. The Rabbis, by preaching about the great merits of the observances, did their share to avert the destruction which threatened the House of Jacob.

(6) The list of the Amoraic Agadists in the fourth century may be headed by *R. Helbo*, who derives from Gen. 12. 16 that blessing in the home is to be attributed to the merits of women, therefore man should be careful to honour his wife.<sup>281</sup> A very remarkable saying on our subject is preserved in the name of *R. Aibo*. He taught that there are three groups of people. The first set holds that it is quite sufficient reward for men having been created to see the planets and stars. The second set does not want any reward in this world. The reward may be preserved for the world to come. The third set is that of the lazy workmen who say: 'Give us now, for our deeds as well as for the deeds of our fathers.'<sup>282</sup> There were people who did not expect any reward at all for their good deeds, for the charity and observances they performed. The admiration of nature recompensed them for everything. These philosophers may have been in a great minority. Others would not forgo their reward, but did not claim it in this world, and were satisfied to receive it in a future world. Finally, the last group, which wanted to enjoy the work of their hands in this world. Besides their own reward, they tried to reap the rewards due to them on account of the deeds of the fathers. These were the lazy labourers. The world was created, we hear in another saying, for man's sake. God prepared everything necessary for man, and then man was created. Like a king who had a palace full of the best things, if there were no people to enjoy the good things, what pleasure would he derive

<sup>281</sup> b. B. M. 59 a: לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתי שאין הברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא בשביל אשתו שנ' ולאברהם היטיב בעבורה.

<sup>282</sup> M. Ps., p. 78, ed. Buber; v. Cicero, *de nat. deorum*, II, 14; cf. Oppenheim, *האסיף* (IV), 5654, p. 88, note.

therefrom? <sup>283</sup> God is the king; the palace, this world; the guests, humanity. What is the use of all good and enjoyable things without man? He repeats further the doctrine of the Gentiles' merits. Gentiles are able to acquire merits. To Isa. 63, 'I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the nations there was none with me.' Does God require the help or support of the nations that the prophet says: 'And of the nations there was none with me?' No, but God says: 'When I search the books (פנקסותיה) of the nations, and there will be found no merit for them before Me, then I tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury' (ibid.). <sup>284</sup> In Gen. 30. 22 R. Aibo sees a reference to the merits of Rachel (ויזכר אלהים חרחל), of Leah (את רחל), of Jacob (וישמע אליה אלהים), and of the servants (ויפתה את רחמה). <sup>285</sup> The merit of circumcision brings atonement. <sup>285a</sup> R. Reuben also dealt with the question: 'For whose sake was the world created?' He thought, for Jacob's sake! <sup>286</sup> R. Hanin repeats that the Manna was given to Israel for the merits of Abraham. <sup>287</sup> New is the idea that the Messiah will come for the merit of kindling the perpetual lamp, <sup>288</sup> and the thought that the cities of the coast, whose ill fame of immorality is often repeated in the literature, exist for the merit of one proselyte, of one God-fearing man, who arises in their midst yearly. <sup>289</sup> Here again we hear that the Gentiles too have merits, or in other words, even among the nations there are righteous, good men. We have no right to generalize by classifying between Israel and Gentiles, as if the former were absolutely good, the latter entirely bad. Another contemporary Agadist, R. *Jeremia*, found in the word 'Sulamith' (Cant. 7. 1) the thought that the world owes its existence and stability to Israel and to the Torah. Israel is called by God the peacemaker. A nation which solicits peace between God

<sup>283</sup> Gen. r. 8. 5.

<sup>284</sup> Esther r. to 1. 1.

<sup>285</sup> Gen. r. 71. 1.

<sup>285a</sup> Gen. r. 47. 9.

<sup>286</sup> Lev. r. 36. 4; Tanh. B., I, p. 132 based on Isa. 43. 1.

<sup>287</sup> Exod. r. 25. 5.

<sup>288</sup> Lev. r. 31. 9.

<sup>289</sup> Gen. r. 28. 5.

and the world. For, had Israel not received the Torah, God surely would have destroyed the world.<sup>290</sup> The same idea is taught by *R. Acha*.<sup>291</sup> This Agadist expresses it in different words, when he says: 'The world stands for the sake of those who walk in uprightness, for all the miracles and mighty deeds of God done in the world were performed for the merit of those that walk upright in the way.'<sup>292</sup> He took part in the great discussion which engaged the mind of the teachers in the third century, as to the period when the merits of the fathers ceased to work, and held that they never ceased and never will cease to operate.<sup>293</sup> As to the problem, for whose sake the world was created—a question dealt with by nearly all the important Agadists of this period—*R. Acha* derives from Deut. 33, 21 that it was for the merits of Moses.<sup>294</sup> God forgave Israel, after the deed of the golden calf, for the merits of Abraham.<sup>295</sup> Further, he derives from Ps. 123, 3-4 that Jerusalem will be rebuilt for the merits of the tribes;<sup>296</sup> and, finally, he repeats the view, often expressed by previous teachers, that the observances were given as an opportunity to acquire merits;<sup>297</sup> but not as it was taught by the Church as a punishment or degradation. *R. Judan* advances three theories on the problem for whose merits the world was created. The first teaches us that for Abraham's merits.<sup>298</sup> The second assumes that the world was created for the sake of the Torah.<sup>299</sup> In the third saying we are told: 'Great is the fear of God, for heaven and earth were only created for the merit of fear,' as it is said, Eccles. 3, 14, 'and God did it in

<sup>290</sup> Cant. r. 77. 1; Gen. r. 66. 2; R. Idi.

<sup>291</sup> Gen. r. 66. 2.

<sup>292</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 488.

<sup>293</sup> Lev. r. 36. 5; j. Synh. 27 d.

<sup>294</sup> Lev. r., ch. 36. 4, v. however, b. Synh. 98 B where the saying is attributed to Samuel ben Nahmani.

<sup>295</sup> Exod. r. 44. 4.

<sup>296</sup> Tanh. I, p. 174; M. Ps. Pr. 67 a.

<sup>297</sup> Lev. r. 31. 8.

<sup>298</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 444; Gen. r. 12. 8; M. Samuel, 9. 2.

<sup>299</sup> Gen. r. 12. 2, v. however Pes. r., p. 14 a, *R. Judah b. Shalom*.

order that they shall have fear before Him.'<sup>300</sup> There is, however, no contradiction in these three theories, for Abraham embodies the idea of Torah and the fear of God. The two latter ideas complete one another. Study or knowledge of the Torah is worthless without fear of God, just as the latter is incomplete without the former. The blessing in business and daily transactions is due to the merit of Jacob.<sup>301</sup> For the merit of the song at the sea (Exod. 15. 2) Israel was clothed by God during the forty years' journey in the wilderness (Deut. 18. 4).<sup>302</sup> Finally, we have to mention a catalogue of merits which are enumerated by R. Judan, for the purpose of explaining which merits enabled the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. These merits are: (1) Torah (Deut. 4. 44); (2) Circumcision (Gen. 17. 10); (3) Sabbath (Isa. 56. 2); (4) Jerusalem (Ezek. 5. 5); (5) the Tribes (Gen. 49. 28); (6) Judah (Deut. 23. 7); (7) Israel (Cant. 7. 8); (8) the holy gifts (Exod. 25. 3); (9) tithes (Mal. 3. 10); and (10) sacrifices (Lev. 16. 3).<sup>303</sup> *R. Joshua ben Nehemia* gives us also his opinion on a burning question of his time, when he says: 'For the merits of the tribes was the Universe created' (v. p. 124). In another passage he warned his audience not to rely too much on the merits of others. He makes God say in a legend: 'You think, O Israel! you may freely make Me angry, because the image of Jacob is engraved on My throne of glory. Lo! here it is, and He cast down from heaven the glory of Israel.'<sup>304</sup> The image of Jacob engraven on the throne of glory in heaven—an old Agadic idea—misled many people, who erred, saying: 'We do not want our own merits, those of Jacob will protect us!' This teacher replied to them: 'You must get original merits, and do not rely on those of your

<sup>300</sup> Eccles. r. 3. 17.

<sup>301</sup> Cant. 3. 6, אֲבִיבָהּ = אֲבִיבָהּ; Gen. r. 32. 25; Cant. r. 3. 5.

<sup>302</sup> M. Ps., ed. B., p. 198.

<sup>303</sup> Pes. 176 a; Lev. r. 21; Pes. r. 191 a, in all verses אֲבִיבָהּ is used just as in Lev. 16. 8; v. also Exod. r. 36. 8; Tanh. I, p. 102.

<sup>304</sup> Lam. 2. 1; Lam. 2. 1, v. also *R. Isaac* Lam r. 2. 7.

ancestors!' His contemporary *R. Phinehas ben Hama* enters into the theoretical side of our doctrine, saying that a man should not claim the reward for his good works and deeds at once. Had the fathers claimed their due reward at once, how could the seed of the pious have been saved?<sup>305</sup> This teaching implies—especially as given in *Exod. r. 44. 3*—that God pardoned Israel's sin for the merits of the fathers; secondly, the surplus of merits which the fathers or the righteous accumulate, holds good for posterity or for their contemporaries respectively. We can understand, therefore, why he thinks that the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt for the merits of the pious women (p. 142), or that the seventy rams Israel offered up are done for the seventy nations. For these sacrifices rain came down even for the Gentiles.<sup>306</sup>

One of the most prominent Agadists of the fourth century was *R. Berechja*, who explains first of all the theory of our doctrine, when he says: 'Even at a time when Israel has no deeds, God helps them, so that His might and name shall be known.'<sup>307</sup> Even without meritorious works God assists Israel. In agreement with this saying is another teaching of the same scribe. In case the merits of the fathers (the mountains) are shaken and those of the mothers (the hills) tremble, i. e. cannot help, God's grace never forsakes them.<sup>308</sup> The world was created for Israel's sake,<sup>309</sup> it stands for the merits of the righteous.<sup>310</sup> 'Although,' says God, 'I created and I bear (carry) the world, still, when there are righteous men in the world, it is as if they carry (keep up) it.' God does not require the help of the righteous to keep the world going. Yet as a sign of appreciation they are regarded

<sup>305</sup> *j. Synh. 27 d*; *Lev. r. 36. 3*; *Exod. r. 44. 3*.

<sup>306</sup> *Pes. 193 B*; *Lam. r. 1. 23*; *Cant. r. 1. 15*; *4. 1*; *M. Ps., p. 464*; *Tanh. IV, p. 156*; *Num. r., ch. 21, 22, anonym.*

<sup>307</sup> *M. Ps., ed. B., p. 314 f.*; *Midrash in Jalkut, par. 792.*

<sup>308</sup> *j. Synh. 27 d, v. Lev. r. 36. 4, v. p. 13.*

<sup>309</sup> *Gen. r. 1. 1, based on Jer. 2. 3*; *Lev. r. 36. 4*; *Gen. r. 1. 4, R. Acha.*

<sup>310</sup> *Agadath Bereshith, ed. Buber, p. 115.*

as co-bearers of this world. Of the righteous men and women he emphasizes particularly the merits of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam,<sup>311</sup> for whose sake the manna, the well, and the clouds of glory accompanied Israel in the wilderness (v. above, pp. 61 and 76, n. 170). Another doctrine, often discussed in the third century, was also developed by R. Berechja. Even in trouble and distress, he says, God remains Israel's friend. God chooses one just man who is able to uphold the course of judgement, and says: 'Enough! This just man is a pledge for Israel.' His name is אשכול, i. e. who studied all branches of the Torah, he atones for all sins of Israel by means of the merits of the fathers of the world, who obeyed God like goats and received the blessing of the world.<sup>312</sup>

*R. Abun* repeats the doctrine that for Israel's sake was the world created (v. p. 109). The redemption from Egypt was not for the merits of the fathers, but for the sake of God's grace.<sup>313</sup> Yet when Moses prayed before God after the deed of the golden calf, he invoked the merits of the righteous, the patriarchs included.<sup>314</sup> The merit of the observances has power to change curses into blessing.<sup>315</sup> In *R. Judah b. Shalom's* Agadah we find likewise that the Universe was created for Israel's sake;<sup>316</sup> and, secondly, the doctrine of God's grace. If we have merits of our own, if we have good deeds, then God gives us of our own; if not, He does charity, and shows us grace of His own free will.<sup>317</sup> *R. Azarja* repeats and supports the view of *R. Joshua ben Korha* that the world was created for the sake of Abraham.<sup>318</sup> God's help in distress is also due to the merit of Abraham.<sup>319</sup> Like *R. Judah*, he ascribes Israel's success in this world in war or peace (study) to the

<sup>311</sup> Lev. r. 27. 6.

<sup>312</sup> Cant. r. 1. 60-61; Gen. r. 44. 6.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Ps. 107. 1; Deut. 9. 4-6; M. Ps., p. 461, according to some MSS. for *R. Huna Hakohen b. Abin*.

<sup>314</sup> Exod. r. 44. 7.

<sup>315</sup> Lev. r. 35. 1 אדם וצורתו.

<sup>316</sup> Tanh. I, p. 2.

<sup>317</sup> Isa. 3. 10; M. Ps., ed. B., p. 324.

<sup>318</sup> Gen. r. 12. 8.

<sup>319</sup> Gen. r. 44. 16.



merit of Jacob.<sup>320</sup> *R. Tanhuma*, the last of the great Agadists, compares Israel with the vine. Just as the latter is supported by dead wood, so living Israel relies on the merit of the fathers.<sup>321</sup>

Of the other Agadists of this period, we have in general very little material dealing with our doctrine. We have to refer merely to six or seven scribes. *Ahaba ben Zeira* is represented with a saying that even the sins of the righteous bring blessing to the world. The children of Jacob sold Joseph, and by doing so, brought blessing to the world.<sup>322</sup> *R. Hanina ben Isaac*, older than *R. Joshua ben Nehemia*, advances two theories on the problem of the creation. In one saying he says: 'Heaven and earth were created for the merit of Jacob.'<sup>323</sup> In another saying of his, we have the doctrine that for Israel's merit the Universe was created. He explains the name of שפרה (Exod. 1. 15) who kept Israel alive,<sup>324</sup> for whose sake heaven and earth were created.<sup>325</sup> In his theology the 'merits' are considered like charms. God says to the genius of Esau when he fought Jacob (Gen. 32. 25): He comes against you with five charms, with his own merit, with that of his father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother. Consider whether you are able to withstand even his own merit? <sup>326</sup> He sees further in Ezek. 9. 4 a proof for those who held that the merits of the fathers ceased before the destruction of the first temple.<sup>327</sup> Of *R. Hijja b. Nehemia* we have the important saying that in the days of the Messiah there will be neither merits nor sins.<sup>328</sup> According to *R. Hela* just men are able to avert punishment which is about to

<sup>320</sup> Cant. r. 3. 5; v. p. 101.

<sup>321</sup> Exod. r. 44. 1.

<sup>322</sup> Gen. r. 84. 16, עבירתן של שבטים זכות היא לעולם.

<sup>323</sup> Ps. 78. 5 and Deut. 4. 26; Lev. r. 36. 4.

<sup>324</sup> Read instead of לאלהים ישראל שהעמידה the words לעולם.

<sup>325</sup> שפרה, v. Job 26. 13; Exod. r. 1. 17.

<sup>326</sup> Gen. r. 77. 3; Cant. r. 3. 6.

<sup>327</sup> Lam. r. 1. 2, v. Samuel b. Sabb. 55 a.

<sup>328</sup> Eccles. r. 12. 1; Lev. r. 18. 1; v. above, p. 7, 7.

come to this world.<sup>329</sup> *R. Idi* teaches that the world exists for the merit of Israel.<sup>330</sup> In a similar sense is his explanation of the word שלמות Chron. 2. 1 to be understood.<sup>331</sup> *R. Nahman*, the son of *R. Samuel b. Nahmani*, ascribes the redemption from Egypt to the merits of five righteous men: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Aaron. The latter are like the five leaves which distinguish the thorn-bush from all other trees.<sup>332</sup> This scribe, who is one of the last of the Palestinian Amoraim, expresses Hillel's view. The merits of the fathers with the merits of the contemporaries achieved the redemption. He teaches further, that for all the vanities and falsehood which the sons of man, i.e. the children of Abraham, commit in this world, the merit of Abraham is great enough to atone.<sup>333</sup> *R. Samuel b. Ami* taught the same idea, finding a reference in Ps. 3. 3 to the merits of the fathers. David says: 'But Thou hast been a shield about me, Thou hast protected me by the merits of the fathers.'<sup>334</sup> *Halaftha ben Kahana* repeats the often-mentioned view that the world was created for the merit of Abraham, yet not only this world, but even the world to come.<sup>335</sup> Another Agadist, about whose age information is lacking, *Menachem b. Zeira* was the only one who pointed out the merits of the martyrs in the Hadrianic persecutions. God rebuilt the world after the flood for the merits of these martyrs.<sup>336</sup> *R. Abba b. Hanina* taught that the merit of the Synhedrion protects the whole world.<sup>336 a</sup>

(7) In the Agadah of the fourth century, we see that the question for whose merit was the world created played a most important part. With very few exceptions, all the

<sup>329</sup> Lev. r. 2. 6, v. Bacher, *Agada der Pal. Amoräer*, III, p. 701, n. 6; read perhaps R. Eleazar.

<sup>330</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 32; Pes. r., p. 356; Cant. r. 7. 3; Tanh. II, p. 105; v. p. 132

<sup>331</sup> Gen. r. 66. 2; *Agadath Cant.* to 2. 1, v. *R. Acha*, p. 160.

<sup>332</sup> Exod. r. 2. 5.

<sup>333</sup> Lev. r. 29. 7.

<sup>334</sup> Pes. 10 B; Tanh. II, p. 106; M. Ps., ed. B., p. 38.

<sup>335</sup> Tanh. B. II, p. 6.

<sup>336</sup> Gen. 8. 21; Ps. 24. 2, 6; Gen. r. 34. 9.

<sup>336 a</sup> b. Synh. 37 a.

great teachers dealt with it, from one point of view or other. The majority held the view that for Israel's sake the Universe was created. This can and will be explained by the conditions prevailing in the communal and religious life on one side, and by the currents of intellectual growth or decline, the trend of philosophical as well as theological speculation, on the other. It must be more than a pure accident when R. Aibo, R. Reuben, R. Acha, R. Judah ben Shalom, R. Joshua ben Nehemia, R. Berechja, R. Abun, R. Azarja, R. Hanina b. Isaac, R. Idi, and Halafta ben Kahana, eleven Agadists, dealt with the same problem. These scribes, famous as teachers and successful as defenders of their religion and nation, fought for Israel's honour with the Scripture in their hands, and with immeasurable love in their heart. Israel despised by low and high, supposed to be forsaken by God—to suit the doctrine of the Church Fathers—a nation alleged to have done nothing for the human race, contributed no blessing for the advancement of mankind. Thus or similarly sounded the verdict of contemporary public opinion on Jews and Judaism. No wonder, when these Scribes of the House of Jacob raised their voice, and taught: 'For Israel's merit was the world created.' They settled in the same manner the problem: 'For whose merit does the world exist?' Certainly for Israel's sake, the bearer of the ideals embodied in the Torah.

Another important topic of the Agadah in this period is the frequent reference to the merits of the fathers generally, and to some of the biblical personages especially. The surplus merits of the fathers bring happiness and forgiveness in the hands of their children, and influence the wonderful course of Israel's history. Besides these merits, there are those of the righteous and pious women. It must be an eternal glory of those scribes, and reveals us their mentality, when they say: 'The blessing of the house is mainly in the honour and happiness of women!' What mothers and wives stood by the side of such teachers? They surely must have had in their own midst womanhood,

worthy in piety and glorious self-sacrifice, of whom they could say: 'For their merits was Israel redeemed from Egypt.' Whilst they acknowledge vicarious merits they teach also the necessity of original virtue and the doctrine of God's grace. A slight opposition to the misuse of the doctrine is also to be observed in this period. This appears in a more or less clear condemnation of those who rely entirely upon the merits of others, as well as in the discussion, whether the merits of the fathers are still available or not. In this period we have for the first time a catalogue of merits.

(8) The Babylonian Agadah, much poorer than the Palestinian, preserved only a few sayings on our doctrine. R. Helbo quotes a prayer of Solomon, which was taught in the school of R. Sheila. Solomon says: 'If I have no works of my own, help for the grace of my father David.'<sup>337</sup> *Rab* says that the righteous man has the power to overrule the decrees of heaven, and by doing so to protect his contemporaries (v. p. 69). He took part with *Samuel* in the discussion as to the period when the influence of the merits of the fathers ceased in Jewish history.<sup>337a</sup> *Rab* himself was regarded as a man of great merits,<sup>338</sup> likewise *R. Ada b. Ahava*. A saying by *R. Judah b. Ezekiel* on the aim of the creation (v. p. 115) is perhaps falsely ascribed to him. *Raba* (רבא) held that life, children, and riches do not depend on merits, but on the influence of the planets. He gives as an instance the lives of two great teachers, *Rabbah* and *R. Hisda*, who lived before him.<sup>339</sup> A man may have great merits, still he may have a short life, unworthy children, and poverty; on the other hand a man with no merits to speak of has often a long life, good children, and riches. *Raba*, typical Babylonian scholar as he was, believed in the rule of stars and planets.<sup>340</sup>

<sup>337</sup> Pes. r. 67 a: אִם אֵין לִי מַעֲשִׂים עֹשֶׂה בְּשִׁבְלִי חֲסִדוֹ שֶׁל דָּוִד אָבִי, v. *MGWJ.*, 1894, p. 176.

<sup>337a</sup> v. p. 104, note 327.

<sup>338</sup> v. b. Taan. 21 B.

<sup>339</sup> b. M. K., p. 29 a.

<sup>340</sup> v. above, p. 34.

## II

(1) *For whose sake was the world created?* This question attracted the attention of the scribes to the same extent as it occupied the thoughts of the philosophers and Church Fathers of the first four centuries. God, who created the world, must have had some purpose in view. What was that purpose? The answer of the *Stoics* was accepted by the early Church Fathers. This school of philosophers taught that the world was created for *the sake of man*.<sup>1</sup> In Hellenistic Jewry it was taught by Philo<sup>2</sup> and by the Sibylline Oracles.<sup>3</sup> The Apologist of the Church, *Marcus Aristides* of Athens, says in his letter to Titus Hadrianus Antoninus: 'I declare that God is the Lord of the Universe, and that He made everything for the sake of man' (I. 3). *Justin Martyr* says in the same way: 'And we were taught that He created of a formless matter everything for the sake of man' (*Apol.* I. 10. 2). The author of the letter to *Diognetus*, while opposing the teachings of the Jews, remarks: 'How is it possible to assume that some of the things, which God created for the use of mankind, should be good, and others bad?' (IV. 2), and more explicitly on another occasion: 'God loved all the creatures; for their sake has He created everything on earth, subdued everything beneath them, and given to them speech and understanding' (X. 2). We need not quote the similar

<sup>1</sup> v. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 3rd ed., III, p. 172; Geffken, *Zwei griech. Apologeten*, p. 33. Seneca says: 'Gods are full of mercy and loving-kindness, everything they do is for our good, for our sake have they created all things,' v. Keim, *Rom und Christentum*, p. 32, and *Theophil. ad Autol.*, I, 6, II, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *De prov.*, II, 84; *De mundi opificis* (I, 12), and *De nominum mutatione* (IV, 340).

<sup>3</sup> IV, 16, cf. Geffken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sybillina*, pp. 18-21.

sayings in the kindred literature,<sup>4</sup> for our purpose it is sufficient to add the words of the *Clementine Recognitions* which include all the others: 'He made man, on whose account He had prepared all things, whose internal species is older, and for whose sake all things that were made, were given up to his service, and assigned to the uses of his habitation' (I. ch. 28).<sup>4a</sup> The *Recognitions* offer us the philosophical view in a clear and definite way. All things are made for man. Celsus, the heathen philosopher, throws light upon some points of controversy between Jews and Christians, teaching that both assume: 'All things are for their uses, earth, water, air, and planets; for their sake were all things created, for their services were all things appointed.'<sup>5</sup> According to this information the original idea went through a not unimportant alteration. Christians thought that all things were not created for man generally, but for the sake of Christians only. Likewise Jews. Origen himself adopts the Stoic view quoted above in its original form (v. IV. 74 and 99), yet Celsus must have had some evidence for his statement, which is confirmed by the Jewish writings. *R. Nehemia*, in the name of *R. Abun*, taught with reference to Isa. 40. 24 ('Yea, they shall not be planted, yea they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth'), 'The Nations of the World have neither plant nor seed, nor root (Isa. 40. 24), and all the three are in one verse'; but as to Israel, all three expressions are applied. They are planted, as it is said; 'I plant them in the earth' (Amos 9. 15), and it is written: 'To plant them in their land' (ibid.). They have seed (sowing), as it is written: 'I will sow them in the land' (Hos. 2. 25). They have a root, as it is said: 'He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root' (Isa. 27. 6). This is to be compared to the dispute between the *straw*, *chaff*, and *stalk* in the

<sup>4</sup> v. Pred. Petri; Clemens, *Strom.* IV, 5-40; Hermas, XII, 4. 2.

<sup>4a</sup> v. also Clem. Hom. III, 36 and XI, 23; cf. Schliemann, *Die Clementinen*, pp. 149 and 169.

<sup>5</sup> Origen c. Cels., IV, 23.

parable. Each of them says: 'For my sake was the field sown.' The wheat says to them: 'Wait until the time comes, we shall be brought to the threshing floor, and we will know for certain for whose sake the field was sown.' When they are brought, then the owner starts to winnow, the chaff is carried away by the wind; he takes the straw and throws it on the ground, then the stalk, and burns it, but he takes the wheat and makes it into an heap. The same is the case with the Nations of the World. Some of them say: *We are Israel, and for our sake was the world created!* Others say: *We are Israel, and for our sake was the world created!* Israel says: 'Wait until the day of the Lord comes, and we shall know for whose sake the world was created!' <sup>6</sup>

The author of this parable is *R. Abun I* (about 300), when Christians disputed among themselves as to which sect has got the right to be called the true Israel.<sup>7</sup> Then *R. Abun* proceeds to attack the Christians by saying that they are fruitless—an argument often raised in the first centuries by heathens against the Jews. Yet the idea of the teaching that the world was created for Israel's sake is older than *R. Abun*. Besides the testimony of *Celsus*, we have a similar parable by an anonymous teacher.<sup>8</sup> We also read the same parable in the *Acts of the Martyrs of Smyrna* (about 250) in the speech delivered by *Pionius* to the Jews of the same city. 'Imagine a floor filled with wheat. Is the heap of chaff greater than that of wheat? When the farmer with the fork or with hand turns the wheat, the chaff is blown away by the wind, the heavy corn remains' (IV. 14). This seems to be the answer to the rabbis' contention that they are the wheat, and the Christians the chaff. We may therefore rightly assume that the idea and parable are older than *R. Abun*, just

<sup>6</sup> Cant. r. 7. 7, *vide* Wertheimer's *בתי מדרשות*, IV, 21; Pes. r. 36 a.

<sup>7</sup> On the subject see my *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, I, pp. 9-18.

<sup>8</sup> Gen. r. 83, 4; M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 16 a. Israel is the wheat of the world, v. Num. r. 1. 4; Tanh., ed. Frkft. 190 b.

as we have proofs that the teaching that the world was created for the sake of Christians is older than Origen, although he seems to pretend as if Celsus attacked the Christians for holding such views, without any justification. Hermas and the II Clemens letter (ch. 14) make it clear that the Church is older than the world, yea, for the sake of the Church was the world created.<sup>9</sup> It was, therefore, nothing else but pure defence, when the rabbis altered the original Stoic teaching that for the sake of Israel was the world created. Before we consider the sayings of the scribes, we have to refer to *IV Ezra* 6. 56 where the Apocalypsisist says: 'I said all these before Thee, O Lord, because Thou didst speak that Thou createst this world for our sake, but all the nations are like nothing' (Isa. 40. 17).<sup>10</sup> We see that the author of this book preached that it was for His people's sake that the world was created. A similar teaching is preserved in the Syriac *Baruch*. The author is well aware of the Doctrine that the world was made for man generally. 'Thou didst say', he remarks, 14. 4 f., 'Thou wilt make man for Thy world, as a ruler of all Thy creatures, so that people may recognize that man was not made for the sake of the world, but just the reverse, the world was made for man's sake. And now, I see, the world made for man's sake continues to exist; we, however, for whose sake it came into being, perish!' God's reply is in the affirmative. 'Yes, it is so, but not for man generally. The world was made for the sake of the righteous' (15. 7). The world was created for such righteous men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (21. 24). The *Assumptio Mosis* leaves no doubt whatever what its author believed. The world was created for the sake of Israel, or according to some emendation for the sake of the Torah [1. 12, if we read *legem* instead of *plebem*], which really, as will be seen later on, amounts to the same thing. For the Law, the Torah, was created from the very begin-

<sup>9</sup> v. Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, I, pp. 99 and 759.

<sup>10</sup> v. also 6. 59 and 7. 11.



ning of the world, as the first thing of the creation, yet given to Israel and not to the children of Adam.

It is significant that the teaching as expressed by IV Ezra, in the report of Celsus and in the Agadah of R. Abun is unknown to the Tannaitic Agadah as well as to the earlier Amoraim. The first Agadist who taught so was *R. Simon ben Lakish*, in the middle of the third century (v. p. 78 f.). The whole context leaves no shadow of a doubt that apologetical reasons induced the teachers to revive this older view. After R. Simon ben Lakish there is a whole group of teachers who adopted or varied this teaching—R. Levi, R. Abba b. Kahana, R. Berechja, R. Acha, R. Judah ben Shalom, R. Hanina ben Isaac, and R. Acha ben Abba. *R. Levi* avails himself of the simile of wheat. Wherefore is Israel compared with wheat? Just as the landlord when he comes to reckon with his tenant farmer (בן בית), what does he count? What does he say to him? Does he perhaps say how many baskets (משפלות) of straw, or how many baskets of stubble or thorns didst thou bring to the storehouse? Where does he put the straw? Into the fire! Where does he throw the manure? On the dunghill! Where the stubble? To the wind! What does he actually say to the farmer? ‘How much wheat hast thou brought in?’ Why? Because it is the vital element of the world (חייתו). God is the landlord, for the whole world belongs to Him (cf. Ps. 24. 1). The farmer is Moses (cf. Num. 12. 7). God did not say to him: ‘Make up your mind to count the nations, who are compared with stubble (cf. Exod. 15. 7; Obad. 1. 18), with thorns (Isa. 33. 12), with straw (Job 21. 18)! Moses was, however, commanded to count Israel, who is compared with wheat.<sup>11</sup> R. Levi must have known the parable of wheat and straw; the underlying doctrine of which was that the field was sown for the sake of wheat only. For the sake of Israel only was the world created. Israel is compared with wheat in an

<sup>11</sup> Pes. r. 35 B–36 A.

anonymous saying, based on Cant. 7. 36: 'Thy womb is like a heap of wheat', i.e. Israel, 'set about with lilies', these are the righteous.<sup>12</sup> We may take it for granted that R. Levi held the view of R. Simon ben Lakish, that the universe was created for Israel's sake.

*R. Abba b. Kahana* derives this teaching from Jer. 2. 3. Israel is holy unto the Lord, His first-fruit. How was God's greatness recognized? By His work in creating the heaven and earth. And for whose merit did He create it? For the merit of Israel, as it is said: 'His first-fruit of its produce.'<sup>13</sup> *R. Berechja* compares בראשית Gen. 1. 1, with Jer. 2. 3, and derives the view that the Universe was created for the merit of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

*R. Judah ben Shalom* found also a proof for this doctrine in the word בראשית, which could have been replaced either by מקדם or by בתחלה. The word was chosen deliberately in order to allude to Jer. 2. 3, and teach that the Universe was created for Israel's sake.<sup>15</sup> *R. Hanina ben Isaac* refers to this doctrine in his explanation of the name שפּרה (v. p. 104), although he had another theory as well on this question. *R. Acha bar Abba*<sup>16</sup> mentions this teaching in a legend: God made up His mind to destroy the whole world (באותה שעה בקש הקב"ה להחזיר את כל העולם כולו לחוה ובהו), and He said: 'The whole Universe which I created, I did for the sake of these, as it is said: I will also smite My

<sup>12</sup> Aboth, *R. Nathan*, ed. Schechter, p. 12 f, 2nd version, and *Agadath Shir Hashirim*, ed. Schechter, p. 91, v. also Cant. r. 7. 6. Cod. Parma, 626 has this teaching in the name of *R. Gamaliel*.

<sup>13</sup> Tanh., I, p. 6, v. my ed. of *Midrash Haseerot ve Yeteroth*, p. 29, note 121.

<sup>14</sup> Lev. r. 36. 4, v. however, Gen. r. 1. 5, where *R. Berechja* teaches that the Universe was created for the merit of Moses. Yet this view is given in Lev. r. 36. 4 in the name of *R. Acha*. There can be no doubt that the correct reading ought to be: אמר בניה העולם ומלואו לא נברא אלא בזכות ובהו, התורה, ר' ברכיה אומר שמים וארץ לא נבראו אלא בזכות ישראל, אמר' ר' אחא בזכות משה.

<sup>15</sup> Tanh. I, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> v. on this name, *RÉJ.* 33, p. 44; *MGWJ.* 41, p. 607; Bacher, *Agada der Pal. Amoräer*, III, 653, n. 8. Hyman, *תולדות תנאים ואמוראים*, I, p. 122.

hands together, and will satisfy My fury (Ezek. 21. 22). The world I created, I have created only with My hands, as it is said: "And My hands have founded (established) the earth", &c. (Isa. 48. 13). Now I will destroy it, and satisfy My fury!' <sup>17</sup>

We come across this view very often in the anonymous Agadah. A few instances may suffice. Moses said: מעונה אלהי קדם 'A dwelling-place is the God of Eternity' (Deut. 33. 27), that is Israel, for whose merits the world was created, and upon them (i.e. for their merits) the world exists.<sup>18</sup> Israel is the dwelling-place, for without Israel the world would never have been created, or without Israel's adherence to God's word the world could not exist. A second instance is taken from a homily based on Isa. 40. 25: 'To whom will you liken me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, who has created these? For whose merit were *these* created?' (v. Gen. 2. 4 תולדות אלה). For the merit of Israel (Exod. 1. 1 שמואל), for whose merit the world exists, and for the merit of *these* statutes and commandments (Deut. 4. 45).<sup>19</sup> A third instance occurs in Ps. Jonathan Targum to Num. 22. 30: And the ass said unto Balaam: 'Woe unto Balaam, the fool (חסיר דעתא)! Now I am but an unclean beast, destined to die in this world and to have no share in the world to come, and yet you cannot curse me, how much less can you do so to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for whose sake the world was created. And nevertheless you are going to try to curse them!' <sup>20</sup> Finally, a fourth instance may be cited, preserved in Massechet Gerim (1. 5), where we read the address to the Proselytes spoken by the authorities of the Court. They

<sup>17</sup> Pes. r., p. 135 a, b; M. Ps. 66 a, ed. Buber, p. 523.

<sup>18</sup> Exod. r. 38. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Exod. r. 48. 2, v. Jalkut, *Machiri. Is.*, ed. Spira, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> Jelandenu, ed. Grünhut: ס' הליקוטין, IV, p. 62 B, reads: ומה האתן שאין לה (לא) זכות ולא ברית אבות נצמייתי לתבוע עלבונה מידך, ישראל שיש להן זכות וברית אבית על אחת כמה וכמה שאתה מבקש לעקור.

said: 'Blessed art thou, who art going to join Him. Who spoke and the world was created. *The world was created for Israel's sake.* Israel is the child of Him. Who is Omnipresent. Israel alone is beloved by Him. What we spoke before (i. e. not to join us) we did in order to make thy merits greater!' These instances prove that the anonymous Agadah accepted the doctrine in the fourth century and onwards.<sup>21</sup> Nothing can prove more strikingly the difference between the address in Mas. Gerim on the one side, and that in the Baraita Jebamot 47 a, where this formulary is quite unknown. Moreover, we have positive proofs that the earlier Agadah differed widely from this conception. First of all we refer to the view that God created the Universe for His own glory. This view was supported by Isa. 43. 7. 'Everything called by My name, have I created for My honour. I formed them, and I made them.'<sup>22</sup> In the Tosefta this saying is attributed to the scribes of the time of the Second Temple, and is based on the text found in Prov. 16. 4: 'The Lord has made everything for His own purpose.'<sup>23</sup> We learn that the old sages held neither the Stoic view, that the world was created for the sake of man, nor was the later view, that the Universe was created for Israel's sake, known to them. A slight echo of this view is perhaps heard in the words of R. Judah.<sup>24</sup> 'God created everything in order that He might be feared.' R. Hijja Rabba and R. Simon ben Halaftha seem to dispute the doctrine that the earth belongs to man. Each in a parable. The first speaks of a man who sells a garment in the market (באיטלים). Some one passes and contends: 'It belongs to me?' The

<sup>21</sup> For the later Agadah, v. אבותיו דר' עקיבה, ed. Wertheimer, p. ה, for Qalir, v. מחזור פסח, ed. Heidenheim, II, p. 100, ובשבילם גיא דוק, יצרת.

<sup>22</sup> Aboth, VI, 11; Aboth of R. Nathan, 40. 16, ed. Schechter, p. 134.

<sup>23</sup> p. 184, l. 14, b. Jomah 38 a, pal. Jomah 3. 9.

<sup>24</sup> ben Ilai (?), the text refers to Judah b. Ezekiel, b. Sabb. 31 ב, v. Tanna debé Elijah, p. 5 ב.

merchant says: 'Very well, if it suits thee, then it is thine, if not, it does not belong to thee.' Likewise spake God with Job. God says: 'Is it not written about Me: "Indeed, I fill heaven and earth" (Neh. 23. 24), and thou sayest: "If My land cry against me"' (Job 32. 38). R. S. b. H. has a similar parable. The merchant sells a maid-servant. The test is whether she obeys the man who claims to be the owner.<sup>25</sup> Both seem to teach that the world belongs to God and for His own glory was it created. The Church Father, *Irenaeus*, must have had these Tannaitic doctrines in his mind when he wrote: 'It was for man's sake, *not for God's glory*, that man was created from the earth to which we belong' (Haer. V. 16. 1), or 'In the beginning God formed Adam, *not because he stood in need of man*, but that he might have some one to receive his benefits' (ibid. IV. 14. 1). It was pure benevolence which induced God to create us (ibid. 2).

Yet we have many traces in the Mishnah also of the view that for man's sake was everything created. The Mishnah has the following passage: 'A man who puts a seal on different materials, they all look alike. How different is it with God! He puts His seal on each creature, still all of them are different. Therefore is each individual obliged to say: 'For my sake was the world created!'<sup>26</sup> No earth-born being has the right to claim privileges. All of them are equal and alike, in spite of many differences. For our purpose it is sufficient to establish that the Mishnah held the view that the Universe was made for man's sake. *Simon ben Azzai* and *Simon ben Zoma* must have had some lively discussions on this point. Whilst Simon ben Azzai represents the view that the Universe was created for the merit of the God-fearing man,<sup>27</sup> Simon

<sup>25</sup> Pes. 98 b; Tanh., B. V., p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> b. Synh. 37 a.

<sup>27</sup> b. Ber. 6 b. The reading is not established beyond doubt, v. p. 45 f. Saadya had in his text צוה לזה, v. Wertheimer, על ברכות, פ' רס"ג ע"ב, Jerusalem, 5668, p. 2 b, 'to obey'. Haj Gaon was also asked as to the correct text of the passage, and reads: צוה לזה, and comments: וביאורו

ben Zoma, however, teaches that the world was created for man's sake (v. p. 45 f.). God did not create the world merely for His household, the righteous or pious, but for all mankind.

In the following periods we find scribes who propagated the view of Ben Azzai, and others who sided with Ben Zoma. We turn to the latter first. In the second century R. Joshua ben Korha preached on this theme. On Eccles. 1. 4, 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever', he remarks, 'Ecclesiastes ought to have said: "The earth passeth away and the earth comes again, but the generation (i. e. man) abideth for ever." Who was created for whom? Was man created for the sake of the earth, or the earth for the sake of man? Surely the earth for the sake of man. Why does Ecclesiastes give expression to the teaching in this way? To tell you: Man passeth away because he does not discharge his duties towards God (שאינו עומד בתפקידו של הקב"ה), but the earth which discharges faithfully God's commandments abideth for ever.'<sup>28</sup> The universe was created for man's sake. Not for a sect or a special nation, but for all mankind. There is no difference between Jews or Gentiles, Greeks or Barbarians, righteous or wicked. For all of them was the world created, yet the earth abideth for ever, whilst man passeth away. The same view was adopted by Simon ben Eleazar and Simon ben Menassja (v. p. 61 f.). They derive it from the life of nature. Beast and birds, sun and moon were created for the service of man. It is not impossible that we have here sayings before us directed against Celsus or other philosophers of the same mind and temperament, who denied that the

חברותא לזה והוא מפורסם בלשונינו שם החברותא צותא ואמר כי ה' קהלת, v. Wertheimer, ברא העולם לחברותא לאנשי הדת מפני שהם החפץ לשלמה, § 58. Nathan ben Jechiel read לצבות לזה, s. v. צבת 'to please him'. All readings seem to amount to the same thing. The Universe was created to please, or to obey, or to listen to the pious, v. also Rashi.

<sup>28</sup> Eccles. r. 1. 9, v. also above, p. 111 (Syriac Baruch).

world was made for man. The animals might even with better reason regard themselves as the special objects of God's care. Man seeks his food with pain and toil. 'The animals neither sow nor plough, the earth supplies them freely with all that they may need.' The Rabbis replied: 'If that is the case with the beasts, how much more is it with man?' In the third and fourth centuries R. Levi<sup>29</sup> and R. Aibo dwelt on this point. The former says, Eccles. 6. 2, 3, 7, 10; 7. 28; Lev. 4. 1, the word נפש is mentioned six times, corresponding to the six days of creation. God says to the soul: 'I created everything for the sake of the soul, and the soul sinned!'<sup>30</sup> R. Aibo speaks of people who found satisfaction in the idea that the Universe was created for their sake (v. p. 98).

We see that the view of Ben Zoma was represented by a few scribes, that of Ben Azzai enjoyed much greater popularity. The impression Ben Azzai's theory made upon his contemporaries and the following generations can be classified in two groups. The views of the first set can be put briefly. The world was created for the sake of the righteous. The wicked share the benefits and advantages of the righteous. Righteousness is the aim of the creation.

Some tried to find this ideal of righteousness personified in the life and deeds of some biblical personages. Others substitute the Torah, its ideals and teachings, its duties and the way of life, for the individuals who represent by their actions and works the ideals laid down in the Torah. As a matter of fact both preach and teach the same doctrine. The world was not created in vain. It was called into existence for the development of that righteousness, for which the Torah, and with it Judaism stands. This will explain also the doctrine: For Israel's sake was the world created.

<sup>29</sup> v. also above, p. 112 f., where R. Levi is represented as having taught that for Israel's sake was the universe created. Israel as bearer of the ideals laid down in the Torah may be regarded as the ideal 'man' for whose sake everything was created.

<sup>30</sup> Lev. r. 4. 2; Eccles. r. 7. 16.

Now the question arises: What was the reason why this doctrine, namely, for Israel's sake was the world created, superseded the other view which taught that the Universe was created for man's sake? Secondly, we notice that some of the Apocalyptic writers proclaim the creation as having been made for Israel's sake; the more exclusive teachers of Judaism, the Agadists, adhere to the entirely universalistic view that for man's sake generally was the world created.<sup>31</sup> There must be some historical ground for these facts. Before we attempt to answer these questions, the development of Ben Azzai's doctrine must be stated.

The world was created for the merit of the righteous. Besides Ben Azzai we find this view expressed by 2 Baruch [15. 7-8, v. also 4 Ezra 6. 55]. 'On account of the righteous has this world come into existence, so shall be created the world to come on their account.' *R. Eleazar ben Simon ben Jochai* quotes this view as a generally acknowledged fact.<sup>32</sup> *R. Joshua ben Korha*, whom we saw representing the view that the world was made for man's sake (v. pp. 59 and 117), taught also, if we may trust our texts, that it was created for the sake of the righteous. He explains, namely, Isa. 65. 22 ('as the days of a tree shall be the days of My people'). Under 'Tree' we have to understand, according to Prov. 3. 18, the Torah. If the Torah, which was created for the glory (לכבוד) of Israel, endures for ever, how much more do the righteous, for whose merit the Universe was created.<sup>33</sup> There is also an anonymous statement, preceding that of *R. Joshua ben Korha*, which may be older than that of *R. J. b. K.*, and expresses the same view somewhat differently, explaining the words 'like the days of heaven and earth' (Deut. 11. 21) as indicating that they will live for ever. Likewise it is said: 'Just as the new heavens and the new earth, which I shall make, will stand before me,

<sup>31</sup> v. Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, I, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> Sifré, Deut., p. 77 B: ק"ו לצדיקים שבעבורן נברא העולם.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 83 B. Jalkut reads *R. Simon ben Jochai*.



says the Lord' (Isa. 66. 22). If heaven and earth which were created for the honour of Israel (לכבודן של ישראל) stand and exist for ever, then as regards the righteous for whose sake the world was created (לצדיקים שבעבורם נברא), how much more will they live for ever.<sup>34</sup> It is to be noted that the world was not created for Israel's sake, but for the sake of the righteous (לבעבורם—לכבודן). The next Agadist who expressed this idea is *R. Jose ben Hanina*. He gives the following parable. There was once a king who prepared a banquet, and invited many strangers. He expected them to come in the fourth, fifth, or sixth hour of the day, yet they did not arrive. Towards evening they came, and the king said to them: 'You have done me a great deal of good (טובה גדולה אני צריך להחזיק לכם), I have to thank you very much indeed, because if you had not come, I should have thrown the whole of my banquet to the dogs!' Thus says God to the righteous: 'I have to thank you very much indeed! For your sake have I created the world. Without you, to whom could I give all the good things which I have prepared?'<sup>35</sup> The aim of creation is therefore that good and righteous people shall come, inhabit the earth, and enjoy the banquet which is ready and prepared. *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* teaches also in simple words that the world was created for the sake of even one righteous and God-fearing man (v. p. 83). The great work of creation is by no means wasted, by no means futile, if at least one righteous, one God-fearing man is to be found on it. *R. Abahu* puts meek and modest people instead of righteous (v. p. 85). A beautiful anonymous Agadah carries this idea farther. 'There is one and no second' (Eccles. 4. 8). There is one that is the Holy one, blessed be He, as it is said: 'The Lord is our God. the Lord is One' (Deut. 6. 4). There is no second one, for He has no partner in this world (שותף). He has neither a son, nor a brother. He has no brother, whence shall He

<sup>34</sup> Sifrê, Deut., p. 83 a.

<sup>35</sup> M. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 213, ed. Prague, p. 23 c, to Ps. 31. 20.

have a son? Yet because He loves Israel, therefore He calls them His children (cf. Deut. 14. 1), and calls them brethren and friends (Ps. 122. 8). And there is no end to all His trouble, for all He did in the six days of creation: For whom do I labour, for whom do I deprive My soul from good? Am I not doing it in order that (you shall) join His ways? If there were no righteous men who perform the commandments and do good deeds before Him, would it not be in vain that He created the world?<sup>36</sup> In other words, if there were no righteous people in the world, it would certainly be labour wasted to have created the world. The world was made in order that men shall become good, just, righteous beings, otherwise the creation of the world has no sense. It is childish to assume, according to this Agadist, that a world should have been created without some ultimate aim and ideal. The latter cannot be that men shall eat and drink, play and quarrel, live in travail and leisure, in joy and sorrow, but the purpose is to try to be righteous and good. The banquet is ready, the table is laid for everybody, although only few ought to share it on account of their righteousness. Some of the Agadists give examples of the ideal righteous man for whose sake the world was created. Whilst some have chosen Abraham for their ideal, others speak of Jacob, of the tribes, or of Moses in the same way. An anonymous statement contains the explanation of פתח האהל 'Thou hast opened a good opening (made a good beginning) for the travellers and for the Proselytes. Were it not for thee I had not created heaven and earth, sun and moon.' (The verses referred to are Isa. 40. 22; Ps. 19. 5; Job 25. 5; Gen. r. 48. 7; in all the verses אהל occurs.) The meaning of this passage can only be this, that heaven and earth, sun and moon were only created for Abraham's sake. How did the Agadist get this idea of these passages, and what did he mean by פתח טוב פתחת לעוברים ושבים, פתח טוב פתחת

<sup>36</sup> Eccles. r. 4. 13.

לגרים? The teaching was based on the two words פתח and האהל. The first word symbolizes Abraham's righteousness, whereby he was distinguished from his contemporaries. Abraham lives in the mind of the Agadists as a man who had shown in his time signs of lovingkindness unknown to the ancient world. He introduced, according to the Agadah, hospitality, a virtue unknown and despised by his selfish contemporaries. The ancient world was based on the principle of family ties. The members of a family have to care for each other, they are responsible for one another, they belong to each other. This praiseworthy virtue changed into narrow-minded selfishness, which limited love and care, human feeling and thought to members of the individual clans or tribes, excluding all others who were born or bred in different circumstances. Abraham was the first, according to the Agadah, who broke the chains of such narrow selfishness, and extended the rights of love and hospitality to all who were born 'in the image of God'. Secondly, he was the first who opened the door of the God-fearing people who, educated and brought up in idol worship, felt the ardent desire to recognize Him, who spoke and the world was created, and became a follower of the One and only God in heaven and on earth. That was the true type of a *Zaddik*, for whose sake the world was created. *R. Joshua ben Korha* finds for this idea a proof in the words בהרואם, which could be read by permutation באברהם, i.e. through the merit of Abraham.<sup>37</sup> The *Tanhuma* has this statement in the name of *R. Tahlifa*,<sup>38</sup> anonymously *Pes.*, ed. Buber, p. 200 B. *R. Azarja* explains the view of *R. J. b. K.* in the following way: Why is all this trouble (ῥγκος)? For the merit of him, concerning whom it is said: 'Thou art the God who hast chosen Abraham' (*Neh.* 9. 6). *R. Judan* explains it by referring to *Ps.* 104. 18. It is not said 'the high mountains the wild goats ה'יעלים', but

<sup>37</sup> *Gen.* i. 12. 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ed. Buber*, I, p. 11.

לִיעֲלִים *for the wild goats*. Now the high mountains were created only for the sake of the wild goats, how much more was the whole world only created for the merit of Abraham.<sup>39</sup> Independently of R. Joshua ben Korha we find this view also in the Agada of R. Samuel bar Nahmani and R. Levi. The former formulated an exegetical rule that whenever the word יָדִי occurs, it alludes to some distress and trouble in those days. With regard to Gen. 14. 1 the question was raised: What was the trouble in those days? There was war. A king had a friend in one of his provinces, and for his sake he bestowed favour on the province. Once the Barbarians came and made war against this province. People said: 'Woe unto us! for the king does not favour our province except for his friend's sake.' Likewise was it in those days. The whole world was not created except for the merit of Abraham. When the kings came to fight against him the people said: 'Woe, woe!' <sup>40</sup> R. Levi proved from Isa. 66. 2, וְאֵת כָּל אֵלֶּה יָדִי עָשָׂתָה, 'for all these things have My hands made, and so all these things came to be, says the Lord. Even on him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.'<sup>41</sup> In another passage he (R. Levi) derives the teaching from Joshua 14. 13, 'the great man among the Anakim is Abraham'.<sup>42</sup>

Other Agadists held and proved that the world was made for Jacob's sake. R. Abahu taught all things were formed for the sake of *Jacob*,<sup>43</sup> based on Jer. 10. 16. The portion of *Jacob* is not like them, for it was for his (*Jacob's*) merit that all things were formed (בְּשֵׁבִיל יַעֲקֹב נֵצַר) (הָכֵל). The *Rabbis* go even a step farther, when they say that even Abraham was not created but for the sake of Jacob, because it is said: 'For I know him, that he will

<sup>39</sup> M. Ps., p. 444; Gen. r. 12. 8; fuller version, M. Ps. Prague 53 b.

<sup>40</sup> Ruth r., Introd. 7; v. also Tanh. I, p. 119, וְשִׁבְכוֹתָיו נִבְרְאוּ הָעוֹלָם, הָיָה וְהָעוֹלָם הָבָא.

<sup>41</sup> Gen. r. 12. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Gen. r. 14. 6.

<sup>43</sup> s. Lev. r. 36. 4, v. MGWJ., 1887, p. 124.

command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement' (Gen. 18. 19). And justice and judgement were to be found in Jacob only, as it is said: 'Because there is justice and judgement in Jacob hast thou made him' (i. e. Abraham).<sup>44</sup> *R. Hanina ben Isaac* has the same teaching (v. p. 104). *R. Joshua ben Nehemia* attributes this merit to the twelve tribes.<sup>45</sup> Finally we have to mention the opinion of *R. Berechja* according to whom this merit belongs to Moses.<sup>46</sup> We may, perhaps, guess the reason why Jacob or Moses were substituted for Abraham, by assuming that all these Agadists had chosen one typical example of a 'Zaddik' who typifies the teaching that the world was created for the sake of the righteous.

There was another thought abroad in the schools and synagogues of the second and third centuries which declared that the world was created for the sake of the Torah. First of all we refer to *R. Meir* who seems to have taught that the world was created for him who studies the Torah (v. p. 50). The merit of the Torah and the merit of those who study it is the same in the conceptions of the scribes.

*R. Simon ben Jochai* deals with this problem with reference to Isa. 65. 22: 'Just as the days of the tree are the days of My people.' Under tree (עץ) the Torah is to be understood, as it is said: 'A tree of life is it' (Prov.

<sup>44</sup> Lev. r. 36. 4.

<sup>45</sup> עַבְדֵימִי based on Ezek. 48. 1 and Isa. 66. 2; Gen. r. 12. 2; Pes. r. 10 B, v. also 14 a.

<sup>46</sup> Gen. r. 1. 6, s. however, p. 102, where *R. Berechja* teaches that the world was created for Israel's merit, Lev. r. 36. 4, the name of the teacher is *R. Acha*, based on Deut. 33. 21. It is to be noted that the source of Lev. r. differed from Gen. r. and other Midrashim, in other respects too, thus the view is attributed to *R. Joshua ben Nehemia* which was expressed by *R. Abahu*, who quotes the same in the name of *R. Hanina b. Isaac*, whilst this Agadist taught, as we saw, p. 104, בְּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. The view of *R. Abahu* is uttered likewise by *R. Phinehas* in the name of *R. Reuben*. It often occurs that Agadists quote views of earlier authorities which they themselves do not hold.

3. 18). Who was created for whose sake? Was it the Torah for Israel's sake, or Israel for the Torah's sake? Undoubtedly the Torah for Israel's sake. Now if the Torah, created for Israel's sake, endures for ever, how much more so will Israel live for ever.<sup>47</sup> R. Simon ben Jochai endeavours to demonstrate here, as on many other occasions, the eternity of Israel in refuting the doctrine of the Synagogue's bitter enemies, that Israel, forsaken by God, has given over the historic part it had to play to the Church. He does not seem to know the teaching that the world was created either for Israel's sake or for the Torah's sake. In his time the view was still held that the world was created for man's sake. *R. Benaah* teaches the world was created only for the sake of the Torah<sup>48</sup> based on Prov. 3. 19, where חכמה is identified with תורה. About seventy years later *R. Simon ben Lakish* taught that God made all things conditionally. If Israel would accept the Torah on Mount Sinai the world shall exist; if not, He will destroy it.<sup>49</sup> *R. Judan* teaches the same doctrine based on Lev. 26. 46.<sup>50</sup> The idea is referred to in a legend of *R. Eleazar* ב. אבונה in the name of *R. Acha*. During twenty-six generations was the letter א complaining (קורא חנר) before God, saying: 'Thou hast placed me at the head of all the letters, and still Thou didst create the world with the second letter (i.e. ב, Gen. 1. 1).' God replies: '*My world was created only for the sake of the Torah*, and in future when I come to reveal Myself, and give the Torah unto Israel (cf. Prov. 3. 19), I will place thee at the head of the commandments, and commence with א!' <sup>51</sup> Another Agadist, whose name we do not know, supports this teaching with the different terms

<sup>47</sup> Eccles. r., l. 9, v. p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> Gen. r. 1. 6.

<sup>49</sup> b. Sabb. 88 a; b. A. Z. 3 a, 5 a; also my edition of the *Midrash Haseerot we Yeteroth*, p. 39, note 163, *Menorat ha Maor*, par. 278, reads תניא ר' שמעון אומר.

<sup>50</sup> Gen. r. 12. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Exod. 20. 1; Cant. r. 5. 8; Pes. r. 109 B; Gen. r. 1. 14. An anonymous teacher derives this doctrine from Isa. 51. 16 (Tanh. B., I, p. 7).

used in the offerings of the princes.<sup>52</sup> *R. Tanhum bar Abba* expounded the teaching of *R. Simon ben Lakish* as follows: God saw in the future (צפה) that Israel will receive the Law, otherwise He would not have created the world.<sup>53</sup> These passages must suffice to show us the thoughts of the teachers of Judaism. The idea expressed in these various sayings is that the world was *created for the merit of the Torah*. That means: the intention of the Creator was to make the world a place where the Torah, with all its beauties and blessings, could develop and spread. Or in other words, the world is the body, the Torah its soul. According to ancient thought the soul was created long before the body comes into being. The body is the vessel made to receive the soul, so the body is made for the soul's sake and not *vice versa*. Likewise is it in the case of world and Torah. Therefore the teaching of the Agadists that the world was created for the sake of the Torah, implies that it would be in vain to build a world which has no chance to develop, spread abroad, and bring to ultimate triumph the high ideals of the Torah. How can this be done? How can we achieve this aim? How is such a victory to be accomplished? The old teachers and thinkers of Israel assumed rightly that the Torah is the key which opens the door to the world's need of a peaceful and glorious development in all the moral and social struggles, in all the questions and thoughts concerning life and death. This brings us nearer to the solution of the question raised above, namely: How did they come to teach that the world was created for Israel's sake? Yet, before considering it, we have to mention three other theories as well. *R. Meir* says: 'Great is the commandment of מילה (circumcision) because all the commandments which our father Abraham performed did not entitle him to be called perfect (שלם), until he circumcised himself, as it is

<sup>52</sup> Num. r., ch. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Exod. r. 40. 1, based on Job 28. 27; v. also Simon ben Isaac's מליחה in Heidenheim's ed. of *Selichoth*, 91 B.

said: "Walk before me, and be perfect" (Gen. 17. 1). Another explanation is: 'Great is the commandment of מילה (circumcision), were it not for this commandment God would have never created the world.'<sup>54</sup> It seems that this Tannaitic Agadist at a time when the performance of this duty was punished by death, saw in it the climax of piety, the highest glory of self-sacrifice for whose sake the world was created. He means to say: A man who has such a love of, and a faith in, God that he is ready to die for God, is surely a type for whose sake a world should be created. There are two other views to be mentioned in this connexion. *R. Huna* in the name of *R. Mathna* taught that the world was created for the sake of חלה מעשרות וביכורים,<sup>55</sup> and another view by an unknown teacher that it was for Zion's sake the world was created.<sup>56</sup>

If we review the views dealt with up till now, we cannot miss the answer to our question. We learn that the earliest view was that *for God's glory* was everything made. Secondly, we have the thought of the school which held that all was created *for man's sake*. Thirdly, *for the righteous*. The fourth view put forth is that of the *Torah's merit*. And the last *for Israel's sake*. If we understood rightly what the Agadists meant by the teaching: For the sake of the righteous or for the merit of the Torah was the world created, we shall have the key to the meaning of the doctrine: for Israel's sake was everything made. It does not mean that Israel, as such, has the right to eat the fruits of this world, to enjoy life, to partake of the good things of the earth. As a matter of fact, Israel had the least share at the table of his Heavenly Father, as history proves it, but Israel, as the bearer of the ideal of the Torah, Israel as the assembly which is able to bring forth the proper type of righteousness, has the opportunity to supply ideal personalities, for

<sup>54</sup> Mishnah Ned. 31 a.

<sup>55</sup> Gen. i. 16; v. Num. 15. 20; Deut. 18. 4; Exod. 23. 19.

<sup>56</sup> Tanh., I, 7 a.



whose merit it was fit to create this world. Yet the Agadists did not proclaim this idea before the Church tried to deprive the Synagogue of her spiritual rights and privileges. Only when the Church put forth claims alleged to be based on the Scripture, which led to a righteousness, to a world conception, to an estimation of life far removed from the true spirit of the Torah and Prophets, then did the Agadists come forth with their dogma: *For Israel's sake was the world created*. They had to imitate the half-forgotten Apocalyptic writers who had the same experience previously in a different circle, but under similar circumstances. On the eve of Christianity becoming a power entirely assimilated to heathendom such a defence—and the apologetical tendency of the doctrine is obvious—was not merely a necessity but a sacred duty. The teaching, therefore, that the world was created for Israel's sake is by no means a narrow-minded chauvinistic view, which the leaders of Judaism proclaimed in their pride and self-conceit as one who does not consider the development of the idea might believe, but a well-considered defence of their position in life and the world. The Temple was destroyed, the people bereft of their national independence and rights, under the heels of a cruel conqueror, were threatened by a dangerous attempt of misrepresentation and falsification on the part of the Church; how could those thinkers and teachers, the Agadists, arm themselves against despair and faintheartedness? In no other way than by teaching that Judaism, by its adherence to God, its faithfulness to the Bible and Prophets, by its institutions and doctrines, observances and laws, is the most proper way whereby the ideal can be reached, for which the creation of the world was not love's labour lost.

(2) Another teaching closely connected with our Doctrine has to be dealt with in this place. It is just as the world was created for Israel's sake, so the existence of the world depends on the merit of Israel. In this point, too, there is an agreement between Stoa and Agadah, both

of them holding that the end of the world will come sooner or later. Now there is nothing without cause, reason, or aim in the creation. For whose merit does the world exist? Aristides taught that the world exists merely for the sake of the Christians.<sup>57</sup> Turning to the Agadists, we have to mention first of all *R. Joshua ben Levi*, who says: 'Had the nations of the world known what a blessing the Tabernacle (or Temple) was to them, they would have surrounded it by fortresses (קסטריית) and trenches, in order to defend it. It was more useful to them than to the Israelites. As Solomon said in his prayer: 'And the stranger too who is not from Thy people Israel', and it is written: 'And do everything which the stranger prays for.' Yet when he (Solomon) comes to speak of Israel, what is written? 'And do and give to a man according to his way, as Thou knowest his heart' (1 Kings 8. 41). If he be worthy give him; if not, do not give him. And do not say (it was so at the time when) the Temple (stood), however, were it not for Israel, no rain would descend, the sun would not shine, because for their sake does God do good with the world (מרויח).<sup>58</sup> And in the world to come the Nations of the World will see Israel, how God is with them, they (the Nations of the World) will endeavour to join them, as it is said: 'In those days ten men from all the tongues of the nations will get hold.'<sup>59</sup> This apology of R. J. b. L. teaches first of all that the sun shines, the rain descends for Israel's sake. At the time of the Temple this merit was attributed to the Sanctuary. The Nations of the World do not know this, but presumably deny Israel any virtue or merit. Then we find this teaching emphasized in the Agadah of *R. Simon ben Lakish*. This teacher makes the magicians of Ahasuerus say: 'If thou art going to extirpate Israel the world will

<sup>57</sup> Ch. XVI, v. Geffken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten*, p. 92.

<sup>58</sup> Tanh. f. 190 B.

<sup>59</sup> Zach. 1. 13; Num. r. 1. 3; Tanh. Num. IV, p. 5; Lev. r., ch. 1. 11; Cant. r. 2. 3; Tanh. II, p. 93.

not continue to exist.’<sup>60</sup> *R. Eleazar* says that all the inhabitants of the earth, even the ships which cross from Gallia to Spain (*Aspamia*) are blessed for Israel’s merit.<sup>61</sup> *R. Levi* elaborates this teaching: ‘Israel is a nation for whose merit all the good things (blessings) come to the world. Rain and dew come only for Israel’s sake to the world.’<sup>62</sup> An anonymous teacher explains why Israel is compared with dust. Just as the earth cannot exist without dust, because if there were no dust, trees cannot bring forth fruit, likewise the Nations of the World cannot exist on the earth, if there be no Israelites.<sup>63</sup> Further, the view of *R. Samuel ben Nahmani* must be noticed. The Nations of the World who will pass away from the world without leaving any trace do not say: ‘The blessing of God is upon you, Israel!’ Israel, however, says: ‘We blessed you in the name of the Lord!’ meaning: ‘Is it not sufficient that you get so many blessings and consolations (נחמות) for our merit’, and you say: ‘Keep your blessings for yourself! You extort so many taxes from us and lay so many burdens upon us.’<sup>64</sup> These passages reveal the apologetic tendency of the whole doctrine. The Sages tried to reply to those of their enemies who worried them with the question: ‘What good has Israel done?’ And what good does Israel do in the world? Israel is a fruitless tree, which contributes nothing to the welfare of the family of nations. Has Israel really a right to exist? It is worth while to pay close attention to these reproaches. We know that the grammarian *Apion* with his venomous pen poisoned the souls of his contemporaries and posterity with his words: ‘The Jews have never brought forth a man who distinguished himself either as an inventor or discoverer, as an artist or philosopher, who left the slightest impression upon humanity or man-

<sup>60</sup> *Esther* r., ch. 7, p. 21 B, v. also pp. 20 a, 23 a, *Sifra de Agadta*, p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> s. b. *Jebamot* 63 a.

<sup>62</sup> v. p. 90, n. 251.

<sup>63</sup> *Pes. r.*, p. 45 B.

<sup>64</sup> j. A. Z. 44 B; j. Seb. 35 B, 30 A; j. Gittin 47 B; M. Ps., ed. B., p. 515.

kind.'<sup>65</sup> What we have to think of this market journalist, of this vain self-admirer, has already been said by Josephus. Apion is a sad example of the stupidity of the masses who are led by vainglorious, conscienceless leaders, and an instance of how little brain is needed to influence even great minds. For even a serious historian like Tacitus could not escape in this, as well as in other cases, the bad influence of such a man as the *tympanum propriae famae* or the *Cymbalum mundi*. There is no wonder that such a man as Celsus repeats these words.<sup>66</sup> This question is therefore older than the teachers of the third century. As a matter of fact it was dealt with by the clever *Beruria*, the wife of R. Meir. A man, styled גרויך, asked her about the passage: 'Rejoice, O barren, that thou art childless' (Isa. 54.1). What does that mean? Who can rejoice because one is barren? *Beruria* replied: 'You fool! Why do you not read the end of the sentence? "For more are the children of the forsaken than of the wedded one, says the Lord."' But what does it mean, Rejoice, O barren? Rejoice, O community of Israel, because thou art like the barren woman who has not given birth to children, destined for Hell, like this man is.'<sup>67</sup> *R. Meir* himself expounded the verse, saying: 'Israel was never fruitless, it is only at present trodden down and destroyed by the nations' [Pes. r. 141 a]. Hellenistic writers, apologists, and historians had to take refuge in another theory. Abraham or Moses were, according to their historical constructions, the inventors and teachers of all arts and wisdom. The Jews have their share, they wanted to prove, in the general progress of civilization and culture.<sup>68</sup> Christianity repeated faithfully these reproaches as well as others. The Jews are a fruitless people, a people which proved unworthy, from whom the Kingdom of Heaven was taken and given unto

<sup>65</sup> Josephus c., Ap. II, 13.

<sup>66</sup> *Orig. contra Cels.* IV, 31.

<sup>67</sup> b. Ber. 10 a.

<sup>68</sup> v. Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien*, I, p. 97; Bergmann, *Apologetik*, p. 156.

a people that will bring forth good fruit.<sup>69</sup> In the fourth century *R. Judah ben Simon* taught that the world was created for the sake of the Torah, but exists for Israel's sake (v. above, p. 92). He illustrates this doctrine with the following parable. A king had once an orchard, nicely planted, one row of figs, one of grapes, one of pomegranates, one of apples. He gave it over to a tenant (אֲרִים) and left the place. After many days the king returned and looked into the orchard to see what the tenant had done. He found the whole orchard full of thistles and thorns. He brought cutters to cut them, and then he noticed one lily among those thistles. He took the lily, shielded it, and was satisfied. The king said: 'For the sake of the lily shall the whole orchard be saved.' Thus the whole world was created for the sake of the Torah. After twenty-six generations God looked about in His world to see what man had done, and found it full of sins. He brought cutters to cut it, v. Ps. 27. 10. Then He noticed a lily, i.e. Israel at the Mount of Sinai, and He was satisfied. God said: 'For the sake of this lily shall the whole orchard be saved, for the merit of Israel shall the world be saved. For Israel's sake the world exists.' *R. Idi* bases this doctrine on Cant. 7. 3: 'Thy womb is a heap of wheat. Is a heap of pepper or of στροβυλος (nut piné) not better than a heap of wheat? Yet the world can live (exist) without pepper or nut pine seeds, but it cannot exist without wheat, likewise is it with Israel, the world cannot exist without it' (v. above, p. 105).

Older than this last conception is the view that the world exists for the sake of the righteous. It was taught first in the school of *R. Ishmael* (v. p. 43). *R. Eleazar ben Shamua* found a proof for it in Prov. 10. 25 ('But the righteous is an everlasting foundation'). Even one righteous man is regarded as the pillar of the world (v. p. 56). *R. Jochanan b. Nappachu* repeated the same saying (v.

<sup>69</sup> Ev. Matt. 21. 43.

p. 74). His friend *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* speaks of peaceful people as the keepers and supporters of the world (p. 83).<sup>70</sup>

A third theory held was that the world stands for the merit of the Torah or the Ten Commandments, i.e. for those who study and observe the Torah and its commandments.<sup>71</sup> Without the Torah the world could not exist. The world was established on a firm basis, since Israel uttered the never-to-be-forgotten words: 'We will do and obey.'<sup>72</sup> This view was taught by *R. Hanina b. Hama*,<sup>73</sup> by *R. Jochanan ben Nappacha* (p. 75), who speaks also in the same connexion of the merits of Moses and Aaron (v. p. 76), by *R. Eleazar ben Pedath*,<sup>74</sup> by *R. Levi* (p. 90), by *R. Jeremia* (p. 99), and *R. Acha* (p. 100). It amounts to the same when we read in the anonymous *Agadah* that the world stands for the merit of those who study the Torah.<sup>75</sup>

To a fourth group belong the views of those who ascribe the existence of the world to peculiar commandments. Thus *R. Meir* to that of circumcision (v. p. 50), *R. Simon ben Jochai* (v. p. 53). *R. Joshua ben Levi* (v. p. 72) and *R. Samuel ben Nahmani* (v. p. 82) saw, like *R. S. b. J.*, in the merit of the Tabernacle the safeguard of the world, whilst *R. Abba bar Kahana* speaks of the merit of the Kingdom of David's house as of the basis of the world (v. p. 91). We distinguish four groups which dealt with our problem.<sup>75a</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The number of the righteous is given in various sources and by various authors differently. The usual number was thirty, v. Gen. r. 49. 7; Tanh. 27 B; וי"א, 13; Pes. 88 a; j. A. Z. 40 c; M. Ps. 5. 5. In Babylonian sources we find the number thirty-six (*Abajji b. Sukkah*, 45 B; b. Synh. 96 B; Alphabeth of Ben Sira, 2 a, *Tanna debe Eljahu*, ch. 18, p. 57 B; *Aphraates Hom.* 22, p. 37 b, or 45, v. b. Hul. 92 a). Yet we have also the number three, M. Ps. 49 a; Midr. Tadshê, p. xli; Num. r. 3. 1; M. Sam. 44, v. also my ed. of the Midr. *Haserot we Yeteroth*, p. 30, n. 125, and p. 36, n. 150.

<sup>71</sup> v. Midrash Tadshê, p. xvi.

<sup>72</sup> v. Tanh. f., p. 280 B.

<sup>73</sup> Cant. r. 7; 1. 50.

<sup>74</sup> v. b. Pes. 68 B; Ncd. 32 a.

<sup>75</sup> Tanh. f. 2 B and 10 a.

<sup>75a</sup> v. also *Pirke of R. Hak*, ed. Schönblum, p. 44 a, אין העולם מתקיים אלא על חסדו של מקום.

There are various theories and attempts to answer the question which must have seriously engaged the mind of people in the first four centuries. In the first theory we see undoubtedly apologetical tendencies. The latter alone, however, are not sufficient to account satisfactorily for the popularity of the theme. Jewish teachers held similar views as to the end of the world as the Stoics. The Synagogue as well as the Porch believed 'the world is going to perish through fire'.<sup>76</sup> This belief was widespread and feared. People asked, 'Since world destruction threatens us any moment, whose merit shall save us?' The teachers pointed out that the merits of Israel, the merits of the righteous, the merits of the Torah and Ten Commandments, of special observances and institutions could avert the disaster hanging over their heads. We, of course, do not believe in such ideas of world destruction, which the ancient sages and teachers thought possible or even imminent. Yet other dangers threaten our world against which we cannot arm ourselves by other means than by those which the ancients held the world was to be saved. That can be accomplished and achieved only by those ideals, by those teachings, by which Judaism in the interpretation of the scribes, stands or falls.

(3) The third problem which agitated the mind of the sages was much wider than the previous ones. Whilst the latter dealt with theoretical questions, for whose sake was the world created, and for whose merit does the world exist?—the third problem of our Doctrine was of a more practical issue. Thus when they asked: 'Why was Adam, who was by no means such a great success, made before Abraham, who was really the crown of the Creation?

<sup>76</sup> Paul Barth, *Die Stoa*, Stuttgart, 1903, pp. 33–41; L. Ginzberg, *הגורן*, VIII, pp. 35–51; Samaritans, v. Joshua, ch. VI; Herzfeld, *Geschichte*, II, p. 601. As to R. Abahu, v. *MGWJ.*, 1887, p. 72, as to Propertius, v. *Rheinisches Museum*, 55, p. 211, and 'Eine Zoroastrische Prophezeiung in christlichem Gewand', by Ernst Kuhn, in *Festschrift für R. v. Roth*, 1898, p. 217; Windischmann, *Zoroastrische Studien*, pp. 259 and 293; Rubin, *סנהדרין הברבלי*, p. 89 א.

Whose merit was it that Abraham's seed was chosen to be God's people? For whose merit were they delivered from Egypt after so many miracles? Why have they crossed the sea? Why have they received the Torah? Why did they receive manna, water, and protection in the wilderness? Why did they cross the Jordan? For whose merit did they inherit the land? Heaven's Providence? For whose sake do they exist? Is God present among them? Why did they experience God's mercy by having their sins forgiven so many times? Will they be redeemed in the future?' These and many more similar questions have to be considered in this section in order to see clearly the part the Doctrine of Merits plays in Rabbinical Theology. We will deal with some of the questions in the order given above:

(a) Adam's disobedience and punishment gave rise to many serious questions. Why was he formed by God's hand imperfect? Jews could not follow extravagant theories by striking out some passages which they did not like, or by declaring them forgeries (e.g. the Clementine Homilies). Every word of the Text is true and divine. Then, they argued, even the creature formed by the hands of Almighty God was imperfect! One of the answers which concerns us here, was that Adam is not the climax of creation, but Abraham, and he (Adam) was formed merely for the merit of Abraham. The case is compared with a king who prepared a banquet and invited a guest. Likewise did God create Adam for the merit of Abraham, as it is said: 'Thou knowest my sitting *in the Garden of Eden*. Mine uprising, i.e. *my exile therefrom*. Thou knowest *for whose merit* Thou hast taken counsel to create me, *for the merit of Him* who comes from afar (i.e. Abraham), as it is said: From a far country a man of his counsel.'<sup>77</sup> Adam was therefore not the crown of the creation, God knew that he was going to sin, and he was merely created for the

<sup>77</sup> Isa. 46. 11; Ps. 139. 2; Gen. r. 15. 5.



merit of Abraham. In that case, people argued, Abraham ought to have been created before Adam. To this we find a reply in the Agadah of *R. Levi* and *R. Abba b. Kahana*. *R. Levi* explains, Isa. 14. 15: 'The man who was greatest among Anakim.' 'Man' refers to Abraham. Why does the Text call him 'greatest'? Because he was worthy to be created before Adam! (but why was he not created before Adam?). God said: 'Perchance he will sin, then there will be none to make amends. Behold, I will create Adam first, and in case he sins, then let Abraham come, and do good instead of Adam.' *R. Abba bar Kahana* compares the case with a man who has a pair of beams, where does he put them? Surely only in the midst of the 'triclineum' (banquet-hall), in order to support those beams which are above and beneath. In the same way God created Abraham in the midst of the generations in order to bear (the defective acts of) the generations before and after him.<sup>78</sup> *R. Abba b. Kahana* might have seen the weak points in the theory of his colleague *R. Levi*, who based his arguments on the doctrine of *freewill*. Yet if the will be free, well then it was just as uncertain that Abraham would reach the ideal, as it was in the case of Adam. *R. Abba b. Kahana*, however, tries to show that there was some purpose in the creation of man. 'Adam was created for the merit of Abraham' means accordingly that the sinner Adam was created before Abraham, who is to be regarded as the climax of the creation. There must be some cogent reason for such views, besides the question mentioned above, why did not the work of God appear faultless and without sin? This point was considered by Agadists scores of times.<sup>79</sup> We have to discover some other reason too, because the views advanced by the

<sup>78</sup> Gen. r. 14. 6; Eccles. r. 2. 11 reads the parable in the name of *R. Judah ben Simon*, M. Ps. 22. 19; 49. 2; 34. 1; *R. Simon*.

<sup>79</sup> He was perfect when he was created; by his own freewill, however, he spoilt his chances, v. my *Midrash Haserot ve Yeteroth*, p. 18, n. 81; he was a great prophet, scholar, v. also *ZfWTh*. 28, p. 477.

anonymous sage, by R. Levi and R. A. b. K. answer this question but partly or not at all. Yet they entirely weaken the often proclaimed dogma which identified Adam with Christ either symbolically or historically.<sup>80</sup> Now, these scribes proved in their own way that Adam was much inferior to Abraham, for whose sake Adam was created. Adam, the inferior, representing the Church can in no possible way be superior to Abraham, representing the Synagogue. We must not overlook in this case, as in so many others, some of which have been already mentioned, the apologetical origin of certain theological views and doctrines. Perhaps to emphasize this idea one of the Agadists taught in an apologetical mood: 'Even Abraham himself was not born but for the merit of Jacob, as it is written: "Because I know," &c. in order to do righteousness and justice (Gen. 18. 19), and there is no righteousness and justice but in Jacob' (v. Ps. 99. 4).<sup>81</sup> Nowhere is צדקה ומשפט to be found except in Jacob, therefore is it no good to argue that Abraham had two sons, or that Isaac had two sons, representing the Church and the Synagogue. Which son had the preference to the other? We, the descendants of Jacob, say the Agadists are the bearers of Abraham's inheritance of righteousness and justice.

There is another view that man was created for God's glory. We have already come across such an opinion about the creation of the world (v. above, p. 115). We saw that the Church Father Irenaeus objected to it. Yet we find this teaching in the ancient part of the marriage liturgy. According to *R. Judah [ben Ezekiel]* the blessing (ברכת התנים) begins: 'Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the world, Who created everything for His own glory, and Who created man.'<sup>82</sup> This prayer must be older than

<sup>80</sup> v. Neander, *Kirchengesch.* I, p. 99; Dähne, *Jud. Alex. Religionsphilosophie*, I, 66; *Christuspartei*, p. 255; Schliemann, *Die Clementinen*, p. 356.

<sup>81</sup> Lev. i. 36. 4.

<sup>82</sup> I. e. for his own glory, v. b. Ket. 8 a; Tr. Kallah, 1. 1, ed. Jerusalem, 1912, p. 1 a, reads וְיִצְחָק בְּרָא לְכַבוֹדוֹ בְּאִי יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

the third century, and is another testimony for the early age of the thought that all things were created for the glory of God. It seems that it was later on abandoned, although many traces of the idea remained in the Liturgy. II Baruch 21. 21 says: 'Because *on account of Thy name* (למען שמך) hast Thou called us a beloved people', answering the question: 'Why was Israel chosen as God's people?' II Baruch replies: 'You need not search for deeper reasons and hidden mysteries, He did it for His own name, just as He created the world or man, according to some opinions, for His own glory.' Yet the agitation of the Gnostics that the God of the Bible needed the world or man, rose to such heights that the view had to be dropped. This theme was discussed by the well-known Matrona and *R. Jose ben Chalafta*. The Matrona says: 'Whomsoever your God likes, He has chosen!' R. J. b. Ch. took a basket full of figs. The lady chose the best ones, and enjoyed them. R. J. b. Ch. said: 'You choose the best figs, and you assume that God is unable to have chosen the best ones. As a matter of fact, He too has chosen those (Israel) whom He regarded as the best ones.'<sup>83</sup> Here we see that Israel was chosen because it was the best of the nations. In another passage we read: 'If one tells you: "God makes rich and poor whom He likes, a king whom He likes, look at Abraham, He made him rich and a ruler when He wanted", you shall answer him and tell him: "Could you do what our father Abraham did?" "What has he done?"' the opponent will ask you. Tell him: 'Abraham was 100 years of age when a son was born unto him, and after all this anxiety he was willing to sacrifice his son for God's sake.'<sup>84</sup> That means to say it was not mere arbitrariness that God has chosen Abraham and his seed. They had real merits which made them fit to become God's people. God's rulership in the world and

<sup>83</sup> Num. r. 3. 2; Tobit 4. 19, 'The Lord gives all good things, He humiliates whom He likes, and at a time when He wants.'

<sup>84</sup> Gen. r. 55. 1:

history is by no means arbitrary, but just; therefore we have to show the merits, thought the ancient sages, explaining why God has shown mercy and miracles to His people.

(b) The first mercy shown by God to Israel was the chastisement meted out to the Egyptians, their oppressors. Besides R. Abun, who held that the redemption was not for the merits of the fathers, but for God's grace (v. p. 103), there are again four trains of thought endeavouring to satisfy the curiosity of the contemporaries on this subject. First we mention the general opinion that Israel was redeemed for the sake of the righteous men and women among them. The first group speaks of the merits of the dead patriarchs, namely, of Abraham, of Jacob. The second group of contemporary righteous men and women. To the latter belong the chaste and pious women who deserved by their conduct to bring freedom and salvation to their race. In spite of the apologetical tendency of this saying, there is a great truth in the words of those ancient teachers of Israel. It has to be emphasized again and again that Judaism recognized that, in a noble, unselfish, high-minded womanhood was the surety of the existence of the race on the one hand and the happiness and well-being of the coming generations on the other. A third group saw the reason of Israel's redemption in the merits of generations yet unborn. Thus R. Eleazar ben Pedath denies entirely the merits of the redeemed ones (p. 84), and speaks of the merits of future generations. R. Abba b. Kahana singled out those of Isaiah's generation (p. 91), whilst *R. Eliezer ben Jacob* speaks of the three young men who were ready to sacrifice themselves for God (v. p. 57).

Different from these conceptions were the teachings of those scribes who pointed to one or more merits, which the redeemed ones have had to acquire by their own work. Such are the merits of circumcision, of the Torah, the Paschal offering, the faithful adherence to ancient customs and the erection of the future Tabernacle.

We begin with the merits of the righteous, whose influence was felt beneficial even after their death. The merits of Abraham. Everything, says an anonymous Agadist, was done for the sake of Abraham, as it is said: 'He hath remembered His holy word unto Abraham His servant, and brought forth His people with joy, and He gave them the law of nations' (Ps. 105. 43). Why? In order that they shall keep His statutes and observe His laws (Ps. 105. 45).<sup>85</sup> *R. Eleazar ben Azarja* bases on these verses the theory that Israel was delivered from Egypt for Abraham's merit.<sup>86</sup> An anonymous writer puts the same view in different words when he says: 'God said to Moses, "Thou shalt redeem Israel for the merit of him with whom I spake between the pieces."' <sup>87</sup> In the *Tanhuma* we read that the Israelites were delivered from Egypt for the merit of Jacob, based on Ps. 105. 10, and Abraham himself was not delivered from Nimrod's fiery furnace but for Jacob's merit.<sup>88</sup> The idea which emphasizes the superiority of Jacob gives some interesting material for investigation. How did this thought arise? First we have to mention the saying of *R. Samuel ben Isaac*. Abraham did not escape from the fiery furnace but for the sake of Jacob. It is to be compared with a man who had a case before the ruler (judge), and he was condemned to death by fire. Then the ruler saw by astrology that this man would have a daughter, destined to be married to the king. Likewise Abraham was condemned to death by fire. God saw that in the future Jacob would come forth of Abraham, and He said: 'Abraham shall be saved for the merit of Jacob.'<sup>89</sup> The supreme contempt of logical thinking is apparent in this saying, yet just as clear is the fact that Jacob is esteemed higher than Abraham. We find the same statement by *R. Berechja* and *R. Levi* in the name of *R. Samuel*

<sup>85</sup> Exod. r. 15. 1.<sup>86</sup> Mech. 19 B.<sup>87</sup> Exod. r. 2. 5.<sup>88</sup> Tanh. 62 B, v. דעת זקנים, 13 a; v. p. 137.<sup>89</sup> Gen. r. 63. 2.

*ben Nahmani*.<sup>90</sup> It is possible that these teachers of the third century were not quite happy in their view that Abraham was the climax of creation, for the Church could always play and argue with the names of Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob (v. above, p. 137 f.). They felt it a necessity of the time to emphasize Jacob's superiority.

A third theory attributes the redemption of Israel from Egypt to the merit of the pious and chaste Hebrew women. *R. Akiba* says: 'The Israelites were delivered from Egypt as a reward for the pious women of those days.'<sup>91</sup> This view is often repeated in the Midrashic literature. A few instances will suffice. (a) *R. Eleazar הקפר* b. *Rabbi* says: Did they not have in their hand four commandments, for which enough reward there cannot be given [שאין העולם כראי בהם], they were not suspected of having committed adultery, there was no evil speech (slander) among them, they changed neither their names nor their language.<sup>92</sup> (b) *R. Nathan* applies to them the verse Cant. 4. 12.<sup>93</sup> (c) Num. r. 3. 4 with reference to Ps. 68. 7: 'God makes the solitary to establish a house,' i. e. the Israelites who went to Egypt solitary in a group of seventy, and God formed them into houses. He brings out the prisoners into prosperity because they kept themselves aloof from adultery, therefore has He delivered them from Egypt. Likewise it is said by Solomon: 'A garden shut up is my sister,' &c. These were the maidens, 'A spring shut up.' These were the married women. God said: 'For their merit will I redeem My children,' that is what it is written: 'Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates,' for this merit will I send them out (יהי בשלח = שלחך), that teaches that the Israelites went out from Egypt for the merit

<sup>90</sup> Lev. r. 36. 4.

<sup>91</sup> Exod. r. 1. 16. 6. Sotah 11 B reads *R. Avira*.

<sup>92</sup> Mech. 5 a; Pes. B. 83 c; Lev. r. 32. 5; Hasit, s. v. נעול; Exod. r. 1. 28; Nr. 20, end; Tanh. בלק, 25; Pirke of R. El., ch. 48; *Tanna de be El.*, r. 10. 23, 24; M. Ps., ed. B. 472, ed. Prague, 57 a, v. p. 62.

<sup>93</sup> Mech. 5 a, n.; Targum Cant. 4. 12; b. Joma 15 a; Sifra, Emor, end.

of the pious women.<sup>94</sup> The investigator of the Agadah cannot rest satisfied in this, as in all the other cases, in spite of the passages from the Scriptures, and asks: Why did the sages repeat this teaching so often and what led them to enunciate such a doctrine? In this case the apologetical tendency of the saying is undoubtedly established. It is well known that some ancient writers, who called themselves critics by nature, invented the cruel allegation that the Jews were the illegitimate children of the Egyptians. The latter ruled over the bodies as well as over the souls of their wretched slaves. This fruit of the perverse imagination of a mind like that of Apion or Lysimachus, the name of the actual author is now unknown, is worthy of its origin. Even a less sensitive and proud people than the Jews would see in such a libel an unheard-of humiliation; how much more the Jews to whom immorality appeared as the abomination of abominations? The words of the Agadists of the second and third centuries re-echo the bitter feeling on the part of the Jews who had to repudiate the 'historical theories' of the public-house philosophers and degenerate politicians of the anti-Semitic genius. The greatest Agadists of those days combat this harmful and shameless accusation of the apostles of hatred. R. Simon ben Halafta,<sup>95</sup> Joshua ben Levi,<sup>96</sup> Judah ben Simon, Hoshaja,<sup>97</sup> R. Isaac,<sup>98</sup> Hijja b. Abba,<sup>99</sup> to mention only a few, took up this subject and repelled it publicly. Our doctrine also tries to refute those libels. The sages wished to say: 'You are entirely mistaken if you dare to suspect and question the purity of our origin, the chastity of our mothers and the virtue of Jewish women! The Scriptures show us that they were נשים

<sup>94</sup> v. also Cant. r. 4. 24; R. Phinehas, R. P. in the name of R. Hijja; M. Ruth, Introd., p. 54; R. Acha; cf. G. Friedländer, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, p. 328, note 1.

<sup>95</sup> Tanh. 137 B.

<sup>96</sup> Cant. r. 4. 27; Pesikta, Buber, p. 82 a, b.

<sup>97</sup> Pes. 82 B; Cant. r. 4. 42 reads R. Phinehas.

<sup>98</sup> Exod. r. 15. 17.

<sup>99</sup> Pes. B. 82; Lev. r. 32. 5.

צדקניות pious, God-fearing women for whose merit our fathers were delivered from Egyptian slavery.' In this, or in a similar manner, spoke these old teachers of the Agadah.

A fourth view was advanced by R. Nehemia (v. p. 56) and developed later by R. Levi. The redemption from Egypt was for the merit of Moses and Aaron. He compares the case with a king who wanted to marry a damsel. People came and said: 'Do not do so. She is very poor indeed, she has really nothing but two earrings. That is all.' The king said: 'Good, then I marry her for these two earrings. Likewise did God! It is sufficient that I redeem Israel for the sake of Moses and Aaron.'<sup>100</sup> It is quite superfluous, he means to say, to search for merits for Israel. For a people that had in its midst two men like Moses and Aaron it was undoubtedly worthy to lead a better life than to remain Pharaoh's slaves.

There is finally a fifth group of thought which does not ascribe the salvation of Israel from the Egyptian bondage to any particular individual, but to some self-acquired virtue or merit. Most significant for the whole doctrine of merits is the saying of *R. Matja ben Cheresch*. The time had come when God had to redeem the oath which He swore unto Abraham to deliver his children, but they had no observances (מצוות) to observe in order that they might be redeemed. They were naked of all commandments. God therefore gave them two observances: the blood of the Paschal offering and the blood of the circumcision, in order that they might be redeemed. There is, namely, no reward without work (Mech. 5 a). 'Without work there can be no reward' is the basis of this teacher's ethics. The redemption must be the outcome of some merit, independent of eminent personages or ancestors. All who are to be redeemed must show themselves that they are worthy of the divine grace. Therefore they received the

<sup>100</sup> Exod. i. 15. 4.



commandments, which they had to observe and fulfil. In the *Pirke of R. Eliezer* this view is expressed by *R. Eleazar* (Eliezer?): 'God said, for the merit of the blood of circumcision and of the Paschal offering have I delivered you from Egypt, and for these merits am I going to deliver you at the end of the fourth kingdom.'<sup>101</sup> The apologetical tendency is more than obvious in this case too; Christian teaching aimed at the abolition of circumcision. The death of Jesus, the blood of the ideal Paschal lamb, made the old observance superfluous, so they argued. The scribes, however, said: 'Just as in Egypt the blood of the Paschal lamb was mingled with the blood of the circumcision, do not therefore be persuaded and beguiled by the view that this ceremony is antiquated and obsolete, for the merit of this observance God will redeem us again. *R. Simon ben Jochai* put this view plainly when he teaches: 'For the merit of circumcision has God delivered them from Egypt.'<sup>102</sup> His contemporaries *R. Judah (ben Ilai)* and *R. Nehemia* dispute whether the redemption was for the merit of the law of circumcision or for the sake of the Torah which the Israelites were about to receive on Mount Sinai. *R. Judah* says it was for the merit of the circumcision (based as all the views above on Ezek. 16. 6). *R. Nehemia* says it was for the merit of the Torah.<sup>103</sup> The view of *R. Nehemia* occurs often.<sup>104</sup>

(c) The same five trains of thought can be recognized in the replies to the question: 'For whose merit was the sea divided before the Israelites?' For the merit of Abraham, according to *R. Benaah* בנאה,<sup>105</sup> but according

<sup>101</sup> Chap. 29, Friedländer, loc. cit., p. 210; v. also Exod. r. 19. 6; *R. Simon ben Halafsta*; Cant. r. 1. 35; ibid. 1. 57; ibid. 3. 14; ibid. 5. 3; ibid. 7. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Mech., pp. 19 B, 20 a.

<sup>103</sup> וִירָא, Exod. 2. 25; וִירָאוּ, Exod. 20. 18; s. Pes. B. 63 B; Pes. r. 83 a; Exod. r. 17. 3; 19. 5; Tanh. וִירָא, 4; M. Ps. 474, and ed. Pr., p. 57 a; Agadath Ber., p. 35.

<sup>104</sup> s. Exod. r. 3. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Mech. 29 B; Mech. R. S. b. J., p. 48; ר' בניה, Exod. r. 21. 8; Gen. r. 55. 12, ר' חייא בר' יוסי בשם ר' מישא ותני לה בשם ר' בנאה.

to *R. Akiba* the merit was Jacob's,<sup>106</sup> or Joseph's, as *Simon of קטרון* held.<sup>107</sup> For the sake of the tribes the sea was divided before them, teaches *Eliezer ben Juda* of ברחותא.<sup>108</sup> The last opinion is chronologically the first; *Shemaja* says: 'Worthy is the faith with which their father Abraham believed in Me, therefore will I divide the sea before them.' *Abtaljon* says: 'Worthy is their own faith that which they believed in Me, so that I shall divide the sea before them.'<sup>109</sup> *Simon of Teman* speaks of the merit of circumcision.<sup>110</sup> This somewhat brief list shows that the principal features of the Doctrine of Merits are represented in this point as well as in the previous one. The significant features in both are: (a) the merits of the ancestors or prominent personalities, and (b) one's own merits.<sup>111</sup> The latter is to be divided in merits actually acquired (faith, circumcision), and to be accomplished in the future (the Torah). *R. Eleazar ben Pedath* (v. p. 84) cannot see in this miracle the influence of any merit, but attributes it to the merits of future generations.

(d) The same differences of opinion can be observed in the historical considerations paid to other outstanding facts of biblical events. Thus the Manna was, according to *Judah ha Levi ben Shalom* in the name of *R. Jonah*, given for the sake of Abraham;<sup>112</sup> according to an older authority, *R. Simai*, *R. Eleazar* in his name, all the supplies the Israelites had in the wilderness were a reward for the trouble which Abraham took in showing hospitality to the angels.<sup>113</sup> Yet we hear, according to *R. Berechja* in the name of *R. Levi*, that the Manna was given for the merit of Moses, the protection by the Cloud of Glory for the merit of Aaron, and the well of water for the sake of

<sup>106</sup> Mech. 29 B; Exod. r. 21. 8.

<sup>107</sup> Gen. r. 87. 10; Mech. 29 B.

<sup>108</sup> Mech. 29 B.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 29 B.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> There is also the merit of the Torah, v. Mech. 72 B; Cant. r. 1. 48.

<sup>112</sup> s. Exod. r. 25. 5; Gen. r. 48. 13; *R. Jonah* in the name of *R. Hama b. Hanina*.

<sup>113</sup> v. also *R. Hama ben Hanina*, p. 81 and *R. Hanin*, p. 99; Gen. r. 48. 10; *R. Isaac*; Exod. r. 24. 4.

Miriam.<sup>114</sup> No traces are known to us that the Manna or any other benefit were for other merits other than those of prominent personages. The reason might be that material advantages or benefits are given for material works. Older, however, than all these views is that of R. Eleazar of Modiim that the Manna and the victory of Amalek was due to the merits of the forefathers (v. p. 41). The crossing of the Jordan was assigned by R. Jochanan ben Nappacha to the merit of Jacob (v. p. 76), by Simon of קטרן, and by R. Judah ben Simon to Joseph (v. pp. 47 and 92).

(c) Finally, we have to deal with the merits which will bring about the future redemption of Israel, which explained to the Israelites of old the unique and marvellous history of their people, its eternity and glory. The opinions are divided on this question as well as on all the previous ones. R. Samuel ben Nahmani (v. p. 81), and R. Eleazar ben Pedath (v. p. 84) do not attribute it to any merit at all. Such a great event cannot be brought about by merits, it must be due to the Grace of God. R. Jochanan and R. Simon ben Lakish (v. p. 78) speak of the merit of repentance, R. Hijja bar Abba (v. p. 87) of the great merit of Sabbath observance. R. Isaac mentions the merit of festivals (v. p. 88), R. Levi ascribes it to the merit of faith and Torah (v. p. 90),<sup>115</sup> and finally R. Hanin, who speaks of the merit of the everlasting lamp (v. p. 99). Only R. Simon ben Lakish (in a second saying, p. 78) and R. Acha make use in this connexion of the merits of Jacob or of his children.

<sup>114</sup> Num. 7. 1, 2; Tanh. 189 B; Telamd. Num. 26 a; Mech. Sifra, p. 129 a; Seder Olam, ch. 10; Cant. r. 4. 13; Lev. r. 27. 6; Sifre Deut., § 305, v. also Ps. Philo, JQR., X, 321.

<sup>115</sup> v. also Midr. Sam., ed. Buber, p. 135, ד"א בקר לא עבות שלא בא בזכות אבות, בזכות מי בא? בזכותה של תורה.

### III

(1) THE history and biography, the virtues and deeds of the fathers, play a most prominent part in the teachings of the scribes. Under the name of 'fathers', the Rabbis understand not only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,<sup>1</sup> but all the biblical personages are included in this term. Sirach includes also in this praise of the fathers, besides the patriarchs *κατ' ἐξοχήν* Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Enoch, Noah, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, Joshua, Kaleb, the Judges, David, Solomon, &c. (ch. 44. 50). In the Hebrew text of Sirach they are called *אבות העולם*, a term which frequently recurs in Rabbinic literature.<sup>2</sup> Besides this title, we meet frequently the term *אבות הראשונים*.<sup>3</sup> A third term was *הרים* (mountains).<sup>4</sup> Generally, however, all the terms

<sup>1</sup> Ber. 16 ב: *אין קורין אבות אלא לשלשה*, to be emended according to Semahot, I, 14: *אין קורין לאבות אבינו אלא לשלשה האבות, ולאמהות*, as a matter of fact *Dereh'erez Zutta*, ch. 1, speaks of seven fathers, *אבות בנותי ברית*, with whom God made a covenant, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, and David; v. also *Pirke, Rabbenu hakkadosh*, ed. Grünhut, VII, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. r. 58. 4; the burial-place is called *קריית ארבע*, because there were buried the four fathers of the world, namely, Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Tanh., ed. Buber, I, p. 119; cf. Gen. r. 65. 4; *Pirke R. Hakkad*, ed. Grünhut, III, 115. The fathers of the world include Abraham, Jacob, and Hezekiah, Deut. r., 2. 1; M. Ps. 13 d, 31 c; Tanh., I, 196; Lam. r. 1. 24; Esther r., ch. 7; Mid. Lam. Zuta., p. 26; Jalkut, *ibid.*, p. 148; Exod. r. 25. 10; Cant. r. 1. 60; Tanh. f. 57 ב. 69 a; M. Ps., ch. 16 (R. Phinehas, 13 d); Exod. r. 472 (R. Zebid in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi); Eccles. r. 75 refers by *אבות העולם* to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some of the scribes were also styled thus, like Shammai and Hillel, by R. Simon ben Jochhai (Gen. r. 1. 21; 12. 14; Lev. r. 36. 1; Tanh. B., I, 15); M. Ps. 13 ב; Ishmael and Akiba (v. M. Edujoth, 1. 4; j. R. H. 56 d; cf. *MGWJ*. 41. 22).

<sup>3</sup> Mech. 11 ב: *אבות הראשונים נהנו בדרך ארץ*; Mech. R. S. b. J., p. 76; Gen. r. 68. 11 (R. Joshua ben Levi); Lev. r. 36. 3; Lev. r. 24. 4 (R. Levi); M. Ps. 3 ב (R. Berechja); Aboth r. Nathan, ch. 9, p. 40; Tanh. f. 282 a.

<sup>4</sup> Sifre Deut., par. 353; Ps. Jonathan, Deut. 33. 15; R. Judah ben

primarily are applied to the three patriarchs. These fathers, the thought of whose creation preceded the creation of the world,<sup>5</sup> meet a different treatment in the theological teachings of the scribes. *R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos* taught that for some reason or other the patriarchs could not stand in judgement before God (b. Arachin 17 a), they could not pledge before the revelation the success of the Torah, they themselves were in need of sureties.<sup>6</sup> With regard to the faults, says Irenaeus,<sup>7</sup> for which the Scriptures condemn the patriarchs and prophets, we should not censure them, nor act like Ham who ridiculed the shame of his father and so fell under a curse, but we should rather give thanks to God for them seeing that their sins were forgiven them. Even the *Pistis Sophia*<sup>8</sup> says: 'Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, however, I forgave all their sins and shortcomings, and I revealed unto them the mysteries of light in the aeons, and have placed them on the place of Zabaoth and all the archontes who did repentance.' We may take it for granted therefore that when the scribes dwell on the faults of the fathers more vividly than pointed out in Scripture, it was done for some special purpose, sometimes hidden from us, sometimes for obvious reasons. Yet in the greater part of the literature there is no limit for the praise and the merit of the fathers.

(2) The merits of the fathers effects atonement and

Ilai and R. Nehemia dispute whether the word הרים 'mountains' signifies the 'patriarchs' or the 'righteous men' generally, Exod. r. 15. 5; Gen. r. 33. 1. Abraham is called הר, Gen. r. 50. 18; Agadath Ber. 50; Augustine *Sermones*, John 1. 1-5, calls the mountains the 'high' souls, hills the 'small' ones, cf. Ps. 71. 3; 120. 1. In later times the designation is most usual, cf. הרי עולם, Cant. r. 7. 3; (Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and Joshua b. Hananja) j. Jeb. 3 a; Nazir. 54 d, v. שפת יתר, ed. Lippman, 2 a. In the Gaonic period, v. Harkavy, *Responsen*, p. 25, n. 132; Wertheimer, קהלת שליה, pp. י"ח and נ"ז; *ibid.*, p. ס"א; *Resp. of Solomon b. Adereth*, p. 110 c, d, no. 414, ed. Hanau, בית האוצר, p. 57 a; אור זרוע, I, 15 b.

<sup>5</sup> Pirke, R. E., ch. 3; Gen. r. 1. 5.

<sup>6</sup> v. Tanh. f. 52 b; v. above, p. 51 f.

<sup>7</sup> *Adv. Haer.* I, 28. 1; III, 23. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, § 135; Schmidt, *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften*, I, p. 230. 16.

forgiveness for their children's sins. This is especially emphasized by R. Hama ben Hanina (v. p. 80). The merits of these patriarchs appear as solicitors and advocates (ניקולוגוס) before God when He judges Israel. This is particularly the case on the Day of Judgement. This doctrine influenced a great deal the liturgy of the New Year and that of the Day of Atonement. They had a type of prayers and supplications, of hymns and poems called זכות אבות, the remembrance of the merits of the fathers.<sup>9</sup> R. Abahu taught that the festivals and Torah were given to Israel for the merits of the fathers (v. p. 85). The three festivals were fixed by God, and the Torah was given for the merits of the fathers, means that the latter influenced indirectly the fate of the children. They were given so that Israel should not appear with empty hands before God. 'Even in our days', explains this teacher, 'although we are oppressed, the Torah does not depart from us. Just as a man who has his case before the king and his defenders (סניגורין), who plead for him, are able to appease the king, so the observances, charities a man does, who studied the Torah, when he is accused by Satan, his good deeds plead for him' (מלמדין). It was a great mercy of God to give Israel these observances for the sake of the fathers.

Of all the fathers, Isaac has the greatest share in bringing about the atonement of Israel's sin. The sacrifice of Isaac is referred to in this connexion numerous times in the prayers and homilies in these centuries, although the merits of Isaac are very seldom alluded to in the Agadah.<sup>10</sup>

Besides the yearly atonement, there was in the past an

<sup>9</sup> v. Halachoth of Isaac ibn Gayyath, שערי שמחה, ed. Bamberger, p. 1: ויורד שליה ציבור ואומר מה שירצה בדברי שבח והודאה והזכרת זכות אבות.

<sup>10</sup> v. Cant. r. 1. 59: אשכול הכופר זה יצחק שנכפת על גבי המזבח; Gen. r. 1. 56. 15; Lev. r. 29. 8 (R. Jochanan); b. R. H. 16 a (R. Abahu); Pes. r. 73 b (R. Azarja); Lev. r. 36. 4; Tanh. f., p. 30 a.

event which called for atonement and forgiveness of sin, and which was achieved for the merits of the fathers. God did not destroy the people of Israel after the making of the golden calf for the Zechut Aboth. This idea is expressed at first by *R. Meir* who taught: The dead ones of the gentiles are dead, those of the Israelites are not dead, for through their merit the living exist (החיים עומדין); an instance for this is, when Israel did that deed, had Moses not mentioned the merits of the fathers<sup>11</sup> they surely would have perished from the world.<sup>12</sup> In the third century *R. Meir's* teaching was developed by *R. Joshua ben Levi*, *Hanina ben Hama*, *Hijja bar Abba* and *Samuel b. Nahmani*. The first of these scribes, *Joshua ben Levi*, has two sayings in which he repeats and transcribes *R. Meir's* thought. For the merits of the fathers and for the merits of the tribes God forgave Israel.<sup>13</sup> In another passage,<sup>14</sup> taught by *R. Zebida*, this teacher invented a dialogue between Moses and God, in order to emphasize the same teaching. Moses: 'Were the "fathers of the world" just or wicked?' God: 'Do make a difference between these and those' (i.e. between the children of Israel and between their fathers). Moses: 'If they were wicked, then it is good to do unto them thus.' God: 'Why?' Moses: 'Because their fathers have no deeds (i.e. merits) with you. But if they were just, then give them the deeds of their fathers.' The deeds of the just are therefore kept with God for the benefit of their children. *R. Hanina bar Hama*, in whose teachings this doctrine

<sup>11</sup> Exod. 32. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Tanh. f. 57 a. The teaching that the pious never die, or are called 'living' even after their death, is taught in the Wisdom of Solomon, 3. 1-4; 4. 16; V. 15; IV. Mac, v. Freudenthal, *Flavius Josephus*, p. 47 a, 69; Sifrê Deut., par. 357. Moses never died, but serves before God, Deut. r. 9. 1; b. Sotah, 13 B; j. Ber. 4 d. 6; Ber. 18 a; Gen. r. 39. 7 (*R. Isaac*); Zohar Trumah, 77 d; Eccles. r. 9. 4; *Tanna debe Eliahu*, r., ch. 18. 61 B and 12 B; Gen. r. 9. 6; *Alphabetum Sirac*. 20 a, v. also the *Sentences of Sextius*, cf. Sânger, Geiger's *Jüd. Zeitschrift*, V, p. 31, and *Midrash Haserot we Yeteroth*, p. 72, n. 176.

<sup>13</sup> Exod. r. 47. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Exod. r. 47. 7.

plays a great part, says: 'Had Moses known how appreciated the sacrifices are, he would have sacrificed all the offerings mentioned in the Torah at the time when Israel committed that deed, yet he ran and relied on the merits of the fathers.'<sup>15</sup> This teacher seems to suggest that the law of sacrifices was at the time yet unknown, otherwise he might have tried to appease God by sacrifices. Anyhow he taught that the prayer of Moses was successful, for he referred to the Zechuth of the fathers. *R. Hijja b. Abba* who pictures dramatically that scene, when Moses prayed for his brethren and people (לא הניח משה זיית ברקיע שלא נתחבט בה) says that Moses drove away three of the five angels of destruction (מלאכי חבלה) by mentioning the merits of the fathers.<sup>16</sup> The last of the Agadists enumerated above, *R. Samuel ben Nahmani*, describes Moses standing in prayer for forty days and forty nights that God might forgive them the deed of the golden calf, yet without the slightest result; but when he mentioned the merits of the fathers, God at once forgave them.<sup>17</sup> The same conception is to be found in an Agadah of *Hezekiah bar Hijja* and in many anonymous sayings.<sup>18</sup> It amounts to the same, when Ps. Philo says: 'God has chosen the people of Israel and has made this covenant with them for ever; if the children of Israel depart from God's ways and forget His covenant, He delivers them for a time into the hands of their enemies, but God is ever mindful of his covenant with the patriarchs. He will always deliver the Israelites and never abandon them' (v. *JQR.*, X, 322). This leads us to understand why, among other attempts to explain and excuse the deed of the Israelites in the wilderness, the teachers were eager to preach and proclaim that God has forgiven that sin on account of the Zechuth Aboth.

<sup>15</sup> Cant. r. 1. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Deut. r. 3. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Exod. r. 44. 2. A fuller version but without name, Deut. r. 3. 15, the words of R. S. b. N. were repeated by Tanhuma b. Abba, Exod. r. 44. 1, v. also M. Ps. 8 a; j. Ber. 8 b.

<sup>18</sup> v. Tanh. I, 90; Agadath Ber., p. 14; Deut. Z., ed. Buber, no. 6.



The opponents of Judaism, from Barnabas to most recent times, found Israel unworthy of being God's chosen people, and added that the whole Law was given as a punishment for that deed.<sup>19</sup> The rabbis replied to all these more or less biased arguments and theories—which have a long and varied history—God forgave our forefathers for the merits of the patriarchs, and wiped out, not Israel, but Israel's sins.

In the following generation this view was taught and explained by R. Acha, R. Phinehas ben Hama, and R. Abun. R. Acha compares the case with a king who had a friend. The latter deposited with the king ten gems. After a short time the friend died and left a daughter. The king married her and gave her a chain of ten pearls. The queen lost the chain, and the king became so enraged for losing it that he wanted to divorce her. Then the queen's best man came in order to persuade the king that he should not carry out his intention. He was not successful at the first or the second attempt. When the best man saw that the king had made up his mind to divorce his wife, he said: 'You want to drive her away because she took your ten gems. Do you think I do not know that her father deposited with you ten gems? Let these be instead of the others.' When Israel committed that deed, God wanted to destroy Israel. Moses said: 'Why art Thou angry?' God: 'Because they nullified the Ten Commandments.' Moses: 'They have something to pay you with.' God: 'What?' Moses: 'Remember the Ten Trials of the fathers' (v. p. 100). R. Phinehas ben Hama says: 'If a man does a *Mitzvah* (i. e. performs a commandment), he should not ask for his reward at once (מִיד לִיד).' Why? That thou shalt not go out empty, for thou wilt not become free from thy sins and art called wicked, for thou didst not try to leave to thy children anything. Had

<sup>19</sup> v. Barnabas letter, cf. Harnack, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 20, p. 132; Iren., *adv. haeres.*, 15. 1; 10. 3; Tertullian, *adv. Marc.*, IV, 5; Diestel, *Die Ausleg. des A. T.*, pp. 55-60.

the fathers claimed the reward of their deeds, how could the seed of the righteous be saved? The surplus righteousness of the fathers was preserved for the offspring. When they did that deed, God saved them (v. p. 102). R. Abun says: 'Moses referred to the righteous, who took no part in that deed, and included the merits of the fathers with them.' We see R. Abun combining the self-acquired merits with those of the fathers. Anonymous teachers found this doctrine expressed in Ps. 3. 3. Many people say to Israel: 'Such a nation, who committed such a thing, after having heard the Decalogue has no hope.' 'But', says Israel, 'God protects me for the merits of the fathers.'<sup>20</sup> Ps. Jonathan Targum frequently points out that Israel was saved in spite of its faults, for the merits of the fathers. To Deut. 1. 1 the Targumist adds, God wanted to destroy Israel when it asked for meat, yet it was saved for the merits of the fathers. To Deut. 9. 19 the fathers are represented as praying in their graves for their children. And finally to Deut. 28. 15 we read the following legend: 'When Moses, the prophet, began to say these words of reproof, earth and heaven quaked in terror, sun, moon, and stars were darkened, the fathers of the world cried bitterly from their graves, all creatures kept silence, the trees did not move. The fathers of the world said: "Have pity (mercy) upon our children when they are guilty. If these curses come upon them, how will they endure it? You might destroy them and our merits cannot protect them; besides us there is no one to intercede on their behalf." There came a "daughter voice" (Bath Kol) from heaven, saying: "Be not afraid, fathers of the world! Even if all the merits of all the generations cease to protect them, yours shall never cease to do so, just as My covenant with you will never be destroyed."' We see that the Targumist held the view that the merits of the fathers operate for the benefit of the children for ever.

<sup>20</sup> Pes., p. 10 a; Tanh. B., II, p. 106; Pes. r., p. 39 a.

The Agadists were not unanimous on this point. R. Joshua ben Levi (p. 71), R. Jochanan (v. notes), R. Levi (v. p. 89), Abba b. Zabda (v. p. 92), R. Hanina b. Isaac (p. 104), and the Babylonian Amoraim Rab and Samuel (v. p. 107), give each of them different periods when the merits of the fathers ceased. R. Acha teaches that the merits of the fathers will never cease to influence the course of Jewish history (v. p. 100). The anonymous Agadah shows also traces of this antagonism in contemporary theological thought. Whilst one derives from Eccles. 8. 5, *יתפר האבינוה*, the view that 'the merits of the fathers shall fail',<sup>21</sup> another Agadist proclaims: 'Whensoever we are in trouble and distress, and we mention the deeds of the fathers before Thee, and their remembrance ascends before Thee, it is regarded as more than all the drink-offerings we offered on the altar.'<sup>22</sup>

(3) The merits of the fathers are emphasized in Agadah in all great events of biblical history. For the merits of the fathers was Israel redeemed from Egypt,<sup>23</sup> likewise was the Manna given and the victory over Amalek,<sup>24</sup> Israel inherited Palestine.<sup>25</sup> Zabdi ben Levi teaches that in all narratives where the word *לולי* occurs, there is an allusion to the merits of the fathers (p. 92).

The merits of the fathers appear especially in the numerous sayings which have reference to the merits of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Joseph and the tribes, Moses, Aaron and Miriam of the house of David, the contemporaries of Isaiah and of the martyrs.<sup>26</sup> The names of a few

<sup>21</sup> Eccles. r. 12. 8; Lam. r. 1. 23, ed. Buber, p. 22; M. Lam. Zutta, p. 130.

<sup>22</sup> Agadath Cant., ed. Schechter, 14. l. 345.

<sup>23</sup> R. Judah ben Ilai, Exod. r. 15. 5.

<sup>24</sup> R. Eleazar of Modiim, p. 41 f.

<sup>25</sup> Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilaean, v. p. 57 f.

<sup>26</sup> Quite a number of teachers ascribe the creation of the world to the merit of Abraham (R. Joshua b. Korha, p. 59; R. Judan, p. 100; R. Azarja, p. 103, and Halaftha b. Kahana, p. 105). The redemption from Egypt (R. Eleazar ben Azarja, p. 43), the miracle at the sea (Shemaja, p. 37; R. Benaah, p. 47), the supply in the wilderness, Manna (R. Simai, p. 65; Hama b. Hanina, p. 81; R. Hanin, p. 99), various deliverances through-

scribes who were regarded as men whose merits were beneficial to the world are: Hanina ben Dosa, Simon ben Jochai, Hijja and his sons, Joshua ben Levi, Adda b. Ahaba, and Rab. By mentioning these names we have turned from the merits of the fathers to the merits of the righteous, which shall be dealt with in one of the following chapters.

This enumeration of the merits of the fathers, collectively and individually, enables us to consider the ethical and philosophical ideas which the scribes thought of God and the world, of Creator and man, of Past and Present, of Israel and the Gentiles. The Patriarchs, as well as other personages of the Bible, accomplished or came near to

out history (Eleazar b. Shamua, p. 56; R. Eleazar, p. 84; R. Levi, p. 88; R. Azarja, p. 103), every blessing (Hanina b. Hama, p. 67; R. Levi, p. 88), even dew (Simon ben Lakish, p. 79) came or comes to Israel and to the world for the merit of Abraham. R. Levi says that the Shechinah was tabernacled in Israel for Abraham's sake. Few are the references to the merits of *Isaac* (v. above, pp. 75, 81, 149). More numerous are those to the merits of *Jacob*. For his merit was the creation of the universe (R. Reuben, p. 99; Hanina ben Isaac, p. 104), the rescue of Abraham from Nimrod's fiery furnace (R. Samuel ben Nahmani, p. 83), the miracle at the sea (R. Akiba, p. 44), and at the Jordan (R. Jochanan, p. 76), the Shechinah (R. Abba b. Kahana, p. 91) and success in life and business (Judan, p. 100; Azarja, p. 103). Similar methods were applied by the Agadists in pointing out the merits of *Judah*, his self-sacrifice at the crossing of the sea (R. Tarphon, p. 45), and his meekness (R. Levi, p. 88) made his tribe and descendants worthy of the leadership in Israel. Some attribute to the merit of *Joseph* the miracles of the crossing of the sea (Simon of Katron, p. 47) and that of the Jordan (Judah ben Simon, p. 92). Others speak of the *twelve tribes* generally for whose merit the world was created (R. Joshua ben Nehemia, p. 101), the sea was crossed (Eliezer ben Judah of Bartota, p. 97), and finally Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Acha, p. 100). Greater is, of course, the merit of *Moses* for whose merits the universe was created (R. Acha, p. 100), the world exists (together with the merits of *Aaron*) (R. Jochanan, p. 76), Israel was redeemed from Egypt (R. Levi, p. 89), crossed the sea (R. Acha, I, p. 100), had the Manna (Levi, p. 89; R. Berechja, p. 102), adds 'clouds of glory for Aaron's and the well for *Miriam's* merit, v. also R. Jochanan, p. 76, and finally those buried in the wilderness will be restored to life for *Moses' merit* (R. Levi, p. 88). Occasional references are to be found to the merits of the kings of the *house of David* (Abba b. Kahana, p. 91), the generation of *Isaiah* (p. 91), the *three martyrs* (Eliezer ben Jacob, p. 57), and to the *ten martyrs of the Hadrianic period* (p. 105).

perfection by their faith and love, unselfishness and charity, observances and performances, studies and works—of those ideals for which alone the world was worthy to be called into existence, and for which it deserves to exist. Thus they gathered treasures in heaven not for themselves but for others. By their works and charity their descendants experienced miracles and wonders in the course of their historical life. By their merits Israel escaped thousands of perils and dangers. For their sake Israel's immortality and eternity are assured.

(4) But not only do the merits of the fathers save or benefit the children, the merits of the children do a great deal of good to their parents. We have to mention first of all a story of *R. Akiba*. *R. Akiba* took a walk in a cemetery, and met a naked black man carrying on his shoulders wood, running like a horse. *R. Akiba* made him stand still, saying: 'If you are a slave, and your master is very cruel, I will redeem you. In case you are very poor, I will help you with money.' The man: 'I pray you let me go, because I am afraid that my superintendents in Hell will become very angry with me.' *R. Akiba* said: 'Who are you, and what is your work?' The man said: 'I am dead, and daily am I sent forth to gather wood, by which I am burnt.' *R. Akiba* inquired about his work before his death. The man confesses having been a publican (or tax-farmer), when he favoured the rich and tortured the poor. *R. Akiba* further inquires: 'Have you heard perhaps from your superintendents whether there is some hope for you?' The man replies: 'Yes, I heard something which is, however, impossible. They said: "If I had a son who would rise in the community to say Kaddish, and the members of the community would answer 'Amen', I could be saved." Well, I left my wife with child, and I do not know whether she gave birth to a boy or a girl, and supposing the first is the case, who will teach my son Torah, for he is friendless in this world.' *R. Akiba* took upon himself the duty to be this friend. *R. Akiba* asked him:

'What is your name?' He replied: 'Ukba.' R. Akiba: The name of your wife? He: שישובה. R. A.: The name of your place? לנקועה. R. Akiba immediately went to this place where, after making the usual inquiries, the people cursed the memory of the man, they told him that the boy was not even circumcised. R. A. initiated him into the covenant of Abraham and began to teach him Torah. Love's labour was lost and R. A. spent forty days fasting. Then he heard a voice from heaven: 'Akiba, why are you fasting?' R. A. says: 'I pledged myself.' Then God opened the boy's heart, and he learnt Torah, Kaddish, the Amidah, Berachot, and grace after meals. He put him before the community, where he said: 'Blessed be the Lord to whom blessing is due.' The community replied: 'Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom.' And he said Kaddish, and they replied: 'Amen'. By this the boy saved his father from Hell. The man appeared to R. Akiba in his dream, and thanked him especially.<sup>27</sup> This story presupposes, as already well known in the second century, the idea of the force and power of the prayers uttered by the children for the well-being of the parents after death. Some external, as well as internal, reasons show that the story cannot be very old, the religious conceptions (like the walking of the deceased spirits in the cemeteries, their being black and naked, running like horses, the burning in fire, the superintendents, the fasting of forty days), as well as the historical background (the position of the tax-farmer, the wealth of R. Akiba, the names of man and wife, of Laodicea) make the dating of the story quite uncertain, if not impossible. Yet we find in the generation after R. Akiba

<sup>27</sup> Tanh. מנורת המאור, I, 1; Grünhut's הליקוטין ס', VI, p. 19 B, f. and Introduction, to the references given there, v. also הניין נפש by Abraham ben Hijja, p. lix, ראשית חכמה, p. 204 d. Read Laodicea instead of לנקועה, v. also Gaster's המעשריות ס', p. 92; אגור, p. 29 a; Gaonic Responsa, ed. Coronel, No. 94; Jellinek, ב"מ, I, 90; Maḥzor Vitry, § 144; Friedmann, Ps. El. Zutta, p. 22.

teachings which closely resemble those contained in the story of R. Akiba. We mention first the view of *R. Judah ben Ilai*, 'And I returned and saw' (Eccles. 4. 1). R. Judah says: 'These are the minors who die in the lifetime (of their parents) *for the sin of their parents* in this world. In the world to come they are standing in the company of the righteous, and their parents will be among the wicked. They (the children) shall say: "We died only for the sins of our parents, *let them come to us for our merits*."' God says: 'Your parents sinned after your death too, then let their sins accuse them.' Then Elijah teaches them to defend the parents, saying: 'Lord of the whole world! Which measure is greater, the measure of mercy or the measure of punishment? Certainly the former is greater, and the latter smaller. We died for the sins of our fathers, if the measure of mercy be greater, then naturally our parents ought to be with us.' Then God says: 'You defended your parents rightly. Let your parents come and be saved from Hell for the merits of their children. Therefore let every one teach his children Torah in order that they shall save him from Hell.'<sup>28</sup> We see here that children, when very young, die for the sins of their parents, and save them, through the study of the Torah from the punishment of Hell. It must not be forgotten that R. Judah ben Ilai was a contemporary of the Hadrianic persecutions and endured the aftermath of the Bar-Kochba war, when the study of the Law was prohibited by the political authorities. How many were weak enough to obey the threats and decrees of the tyrant? The idea that children, whilst they are not responsible for their own actions, die for the sins of their parents, is also expressed in the *Sifrê* (§ 280): 'Each man shall die for his sin, i.e. the parents die for their own sin, children die for the sins of their parents.' Premature death of children comes, according to the views of the Rabbis, for the parents' sins.

<sup>28</sup> Eccles. r. 4. 1.

*R. Meir* and *R. Judah ben Ilai* dispute on this point, whether death comes for the sin of neglecting the commandment of Mezuzah or Zizith.<sup>29</sup> *R. Nehemia* held for the sin of hatred, which is unjustified.<sup>30</sup> *R. Eleazar ben Simon* and *R. Judah I* dispute on the same question. According to one (*R. E. b. S.*) for the sin of vows, according to the other for the neglect of Torah.<sup>31</sup> The father of *R. Eleazar*, *R. Simon ben Jochai*, says that those of the generation of the flood, who did not reach the hundredth year, died for the sins of their parents.<sup>32</sup> A contemporary of these scribes, *R. Meir*, invented a dialogue between God and Israel before the revelation of the Law. God wanted sureties before He handed the Law to Israel. They referred first to the fathers and their merits. God found this unsatisfactory. Then they referred to the children, and their pledge was accepted.<sup>33</sup> Apart from the homiletical character of the whole passage, we see here clearly the idea that God gave the Law to Israel for the merit of future generations. *R. Josiah*, who was older than these Tannaites, and belongs to the pupils of *R. Ishmael*,<sup>34</sup> expressed our doctrine in clearer words, when he says: 'For three things shows God compassion to the wicked (האר"ך פנים) in this world: (a) perhaps they might repent, (b) they may accomplish good works for which they get their reward in this world, and (c) perhaps they will have righteous children. A biblical proof for the last category is Ahaz, who brought forth Hezekiah, Amon whose son was Josiah, and Simei whose protector was his son Mordecai.<sup>35</sup> The wicked fathers benefit by the piety of their children.

Some Rabbis differ from *R. Judah ben Ilai* and *R. Nehemia* in the explanation of Exod. 2. 13 as to the motive of Moses in killing the Egyptian, because he saw that no righteous man would descend from him, nor from

<sup>29</sup> b. Sabb. 32 B.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 32 B.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> M. Ps. 12, ed. B., ed. Pr. has *R. Simon ben Lakish*.

<sup>33</sup> Cant. r. l. 24, v. p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> v. however p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> Eccles. r. 7. 32.



his seed, to the end of all generations. When Moses recognized this fact, he consulted the angels and asked them: 'Is this man guilty of death?' They said, 'Yes.' That is the meaning of the text: And he saw that there was none who would plead the merits of this man.<sup>36</sup> 'And Moses saw by his wisdom and understood that no proselyte will come forth from this man.'<sup>37</sup> The action of Moses was objected to,<sup>38</sup> therefore the scribes endeavoured to explain away Moses' deed. For our purpose we see clearly that the merits of the unborn generations can save their ancestors from misfortune and trouble. The scribes held namely the Stoic doctrine that the souls of the yet unborn generations are created already, and are merely waiting for their turn to come into existence. R. Jose ben Halafta, a contemporary of these scribes, was influenced by the same doctrine, when he taught that Korah was released from hell for the prayer of his descendant, Hannah (v. p. 55). Again, R. Eliezer ben Jacob, who ascribes the redemption from Egypt to the martyrdom of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azaria (v. p. 57).

This conception influenced also to some extent the Halachah. There is a view that it is not permitted to announce publicly the losses which occurred to an Am Haarez.<sup>39</sup> There was, however, another opinion which allowed the advertisement of the losses of the Am Haarez. The reason is that sometimes the children of the Am Haarez will become Pharisees, and for the sake of the children the Am Haarez shares the rights of the Perushim. This rule was also emphasized in the case of the public informer. There is a view, namely, which does not permit the destruction of the property belonging to the public informer, because his children might choose a more decent

<sup>36</sup> שילמד עליו זכות, Exod. i. 1. 33 ; Ps. Jon. Targum, Exod. 2. 12.

<sup>37</sup> v. Illescas, אמרי נועם, p. 11 ב.

<sup>38</sup> v. Clem. Hom. II, ch. 4.

<sup>39</sup> b. Pes. 49 ב, ויש אומרים אף אין מכריזין על אבירדו, ; Pirke, R. H., VI, 23, ed. Schonblum in the Text.

profession.<sup>40</sup> These opinions and views are expressed by the Amoraim, yet it is not unlikely that they reflect the thought of the Tannaïtes.

The Amoraic Agadah fully endorsed this view of their predecessors. It will be sufficient to refer to some of their statements. For instance, *R. Joshua ben Levi*, who said that the community of Korah was sinking lower and lower (שוקעת ויורדת) up to the time when Hannah prayed for them.<sup>41</sup> The prayer of Hannah saved the Korahites from further punishment. Similar is the teaching of *R. Hija* (bar Abba?): 'The bird (v. Deut. 22. 6) which has got neither "the merits of the fathers" nor "covenants", and no oaths, still their young ones atone for them (i.e. they save them from being sent away), how much more should the merit of the children atone for one of Abraham's or Isaac's or Jacob's descendants, in case they sinned.'<sup>42</sup> *R. Samuel ben Isaac* derives from Isa. 29. 22 that Abraham was saved from the fiery furnace for the sake of Jacob.<sup>42a</sup>

Older than *Samuel ben Isaac's* is a similar doctrine of *Bar Kappara*, who explained to his audience why Abraham was saved from Nimrod's fiery furnace. He based his teaching on Cant. 8. 8 f. Abraham was like a man who (מאחה) repairs with patches (קרע). He was engaged performing commandments and charity whilst he was little, and he had no 'breasts' because he was not yet obliged to perform commandments and charity. What shall we do to him who repaired with patches (לאחוזיו) on the day we are speaking of (i.e. the day Nimrod the wicked made him be thrown in the fiery furnace)? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a turret of silver. 'If she be a wall,' that is Abraham, God said: If he establishes things like a wall, we will build upon it a turret of silver, i.e. we will save him and establish him in the world. And if it be a door, we will enclose it with boards of

<sup>40</sup> b. B. B. 119 a.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 10; Synh. 4 a.

<sup>42</sup> Deut. r. 6. 3, I read עליהם מכפר שאלם סרה אחר מהם שבנו מכפר עליהם.

<sup>42a</sup> v. Gen. r. 63. 2.

cedar. If he (Abraham) be poor, empty of good deeds (57), and his deeds are movable, i.e. not firm, like a door, we will enclose upon it a board of cedar. Just as this enclosure only holds for a short time, likewise he will not be established for a long period. 'I am a wall,' Abraham said before God. 'I am a wall, and I will establish good deeds like a wall, and my breasts are like turrets, because I shall bring forth many bands and companies, like me, in Thy world. Then was I in His eyes as one that found peace. God said to him: Just as thou descendest in the furnace of fire, likewise will I bring thee out without harm thence as it said: "I am the Lord who delivered thee from the fire of the Chaldeans".'<sup>43</sup> The implication of this long sermon must have been: For whose merit did Abraham escape from Nimrod's fiery furnace? Only for the merit of the pious and righteous descendants who will live after him. Bar Kappara taught, therefore, that the escape of Abraham was not for Jacob's merit alone, but for the merits of all the righteous in Israel. There are, of course, in this sermon other Agadic types and problems, for instance, the Doctrine of the observances by Abraham, the figures of 'wall' and 'door' in the Agadah which cannot be discussed here.

*R. Eleazar ben Pedath* taught that all the miracles which God performed for Israel, e.g. the redemption from Egypt and the crossing of the sea, were not for their works, but for the sake of posterity that they should relate God's praise among the nations.<sup>44</sup> *R. Simon* dealt with our problem in connexion with the story of Noah. 'We find', he says, 'that God shows lovingkindness to posterity for the sake of the fathers (הראשונים), whence do we know that God does charity with the fathers for the merits of posterity? From Noah. And Noah found favour with God for whose merit? For the merit of his off-

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 15. 7; Cant. r. 8. 9.

<sup>44</sup> M. Ps. B., p. 268. According to Jalkut's rendering, Ps., par. 746; Deut. r., ch. 3; j. Taanit 63 d; Pes. r., p. 184 b.

spring.'<sup>45</sup> *R. Juda ha-Levi ben Shalom* saw in 1 Chron. 22. 9 a proof that the birth of Solomon was a sign that God has forgiven his father's sin.<sup>46</sup>

This teaching is, however, older than Simon ben Pazzi or Abbahu. For already the Book of Jubilees (5. 19) says: 'His person was accepted on behalf of his sons, whom God saved from the waters of the flood on his account.' Hanina ben Papa proved in an agadic way that Noah was saved for the merit of Moses (p. 91).

R. Jose ben Zimra (p. 70), and after him R. Alexander (v. p. 73), prove that just as the merits of the fathers help the children, we have instances in the Bible where the merits of the children help the fathers. We may regard it as an established fact that the Rabbis of the second and third centuries believed that the deeds and merits of the children by their piety and faithfulness, by their study of the law and prayers, can and do benefit their parents. The Kaddish prayer is based on this doctrine. To whom the meaning of the Kaddish is alive, the thought which the words express present to his mind, it must always be life-giving and comfort-bearing. Unfortunately there are people who think that the words of the Kaddish in themselves possess material and magical powers, and turn them into charms, 'Then the purpose which they answer is to hide God from us.' The meaning of the doctrine is so natural and clear that we find it everywhere where common sense prevails in ethical thought and theological speculation.

Here again we have to refer to Seneca, after having enumerated the views of the Tannaim and Amoraim, who says: 'The Gods help very often even those who are unworthy of their help, for the sake of their descendants. They know that some of the children or grandchildren of this man are to become great and virtuous. Some-

<sup>45</sup> Gen. r. 39. 5; Tanh. f. 9 B, v. *MGWJ.*, 1887, pp. 147, 120. This is also taught in the name of *R. Abbahu*.

<sup>46</sup> *M. Ps.*, ed. Buber, p. 46.

times the wicked are saved, for they are descendants of those who are God's beloved friends.<sup>47</sup> It is, therefore, not 'Rabbinical craziness' which invents these theories, but they show step by step the influence of Stoic thought. The same view is to be found in the Shayas la Shayash,<sup>48</sup> where we read: 'The duty and good works which a son performs are as much the father's as though they had been done by his own hand.' A mediaeval Jewish ethical writer, Eliah de Vidas, concludes with a quotation: 'Greater is the power of defence on the part of the children for their parents, than *vice versa*.'<sup>49</sup>

(5) There is to be noticed a strong opposition to the doctrine of the merits of the fathers! The idea had its shadow as well as its light. From the educational point of view the merits of the fathers have filled with zeal numberless Jews to imitate the lofty examples shown by the fathers. Yet knowing what human nature is, the scribes became aware of or experienced the abuses to which this doctrine led. We have seen that during centuries a fight of opinions wavered between the two schools which taught the doctrine of self-acquired and vicarious merits. The latter remained victorious. The more was it opportune to warn against the danger and onesidedness of the recognized school and opinion. There must have been people who sinned and went astray, yet they relied on the virtues of their fathers. They thought: 'We can walk after the desire of our hearts, the "treasure" gathered by our fathers will always hold good for us, will protect us, and grant us forgiveness.' More than one earnest appeal is directed against these in the anonymous Agadah. Fathers cannot save their children. Abraham could not save Ishmael, nor could Isaac protect Esau, as it is said: 'None can save from my hands' (Deut. 32. 39). Whence is it derived that a brother cannot save his brother? e.g. Isaac and Ishmael,

<sup>47</sup> v. Keim, *Rom und Christentum*, p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> X, 22; XII, 15.

<sup>49</sup> ראשית חכמה, p. 203 d.

Jacob and Esau? It is said: 'No man can redeem his brother' (Ps. 49. 8). Why? Because it is said: 'Too costly is the redemption of their soul.' Too costly is the soul of man, hence if a man sinned there is no ransom for his soul.<sup>50</sup> The righteousness and deeds, merits and virtues of the fathers cannot redeem the unworthy offspring from the punishment they fully deserve. This was the view of Abtaljon and his followers. This is implied in Hillel's words. This anonymous Agadah was used by the late compiler of the Aboth of R. Nathan in explaining Hillel's word. Very frequently is this disapproval expressed in the Midrash on Psalms. To Ps. 141. 1 an Agadist puts in David's prayer the words: 'There are some people who trust in their own good works, there are others who trust in their fathers' works, I trust in Thee!' <sup>51</sup> To Ps. 146. 3 we have a paraphrase of the passage in the Sifrê: 'A man should not trust in the works of his fathers. A man like Ishmael should not say: Abraham is my father! I will have of his share, and he will save me! Esau should not say: Jacob is my brother, and for his merits shall I be saved! No, as it is said: "No one can redeem his brother" (Ps. 49. 8). If a man does not perform good works by himself in this world, there is no use in trusting in the work of his fathers, therefore it says: "Put not your trust in princes" (Ps. 146. 3). Wherein shall you put your trust? In your own works (cf. Prov. 9. 12 and 16. 26). In the world to come none shall enjoy the works of his fathers, but each one shall eat of his own (Eccles. 6. 7; 3. 22). A man shall have no other merits but his own.'<sup>52</sup> There is a third passage to be mentioned of the same Midrash: 'On the day of judgement Israel will look forward to the fathers that they may plead on their behalf. Yet no father can save his son, and none his brother. Then Israel will look to God, the father in heaven, and will say: Thou art our father, for Abraham

<sup>50</sup> Sifrê, Deut., § 329; Midr. Tannaim, p. 202.

<sup>51</sup> Ed. Buber, p. 531.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 534.

does not know us' (Isa. 63. 16).<sup>53</sup> None can help Israel but He who spake and heaven and earth were made. These three anonymous passages convey to us a strong opposition to those who relied upon their ancestors' merit, and had no merits of their own. There is another passage in the anonymous Agadah, perhaps much older than those of the Midrash Psalms, which protests against the extreme use of the merits of the fathers. The nations live for the merits of Noah. Israel could be misled to believe: How much more is due to us who rely on the merits of our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Our eternity is assured even without our own works or deeds. 'No', says the Agadist, 'Israel lives for the merits of the observances, but not for the merits of the fathers.'<sup>54</sup>

In the sayings of the Amoraim we detect traces of this opposition in the saying of R. Jose ben Zimra (v. p. 70). People who rely entirely on their own merits, those who get conceited as well as those who have no other merits than those of their fathers are rebuked. There must be a healthy proportion between one's own merits and those of his fathers. R. Jonathan ben Eliezer paraphrases Isa. 63. 16: 'For Thou art our father, for Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel (Jacob) does not acknowledge us,' by means of the following legend. At the day of judgement God will say to Abraham and Jacob: Your

<sup>53</sup> Ed. Buber, p. 505, ed. Prague, 63 B.

<sup>54</sup> Midr. Tannaim, p. 62, v. note 9. There is no difference of opinion between this passage and the view held in Sifrê, Deut., par. 94 or par. 184, where we read **הכל בוכות אבות** because it refers to special promises and predictions, namely, to Deut. 13. 18; **ונתן וישב מחרון אפן והרבך** and **כאשר נשבע** where the words **אם ירחיב** and **לך רחמים** imply **זכות אבות** because such an oath is not explicitly mentioned in the text. The same is to be observed with regard to Exod. 13. 5, where the Mechilta of R. Simon, p. 32, reads: **אשר נשבע לאבותיך הכל בוכות אבות**. Yet all these do not really contradict our passage, as the editors (Schechter and Hoffmann) thought. The fact is that all the promises which conclude with the words **כאשר נשבע לאבותיך**, and are not given in Genesis, contain an allusion to the merits of the fathers, **הכל** refers to the promises.

children sinned. Yet they do not plead their children's case, but Isaac will do so. Then Israel praises Isaac for it, they say: Thou (Isaac) art our father! Isaac replies: Instead of praising me, come and praise God, for He is our father, our redeemer for everlasting is Thy name. He combines the merits of the fathers with God's grace, for which Israel obtains forgiveness of sin. R. Isaac (v. p. 88) has chosen the biography of Esau to illustrate that no father can help his son, procure for him forgiveness of sins. R. Acha b. Hanina (v. p. 93) found in Ezek. 18. 6 the praise of Him who does not rely upon the merits of the fathers. R. Aibo (v. p. 98) calls those people who do not work for their own salvation and justification before God, but trust in the deeds of the fathers, 'lazy labourers'.<sup>55</sup>

A second objection to this doctrine was raised from another quarter. If the 'merits of the fathers' were really of such importance as held by the Jews, so people asked: 'Why did those merits not prevent the destruction of the Temple? Could the fathers not avert the terrible misfortune and sufferings of the Jews? Why are the merits of the fathers not visible in our own days and life? Thus or similarly might the scribes have been interrogated by Jews and Gentiles alike who considered this doctrine critically. We saw that various teachers of the third and fourth centuries tried to show the time-limit when the influence of the fathers' merits ceased (v. p. 154).' There can be no doubt about it that these discussions originated by the question: Were the fathers indifferent as to the fate of Israel in moments of national catastrophe and tragedy? Some of the scribes give us even at length the prayers and intercessions of the fathers in times of distress.<sup>56</sup> In the fourth century the teaching prevailed, as we have shown, in spite of the previous objections,

<sup>55</sup> v. also R. Joshua ben Nehemia, p. 101.

<sup>56</sup> v. esp. Buber's *ספרי ראובן*, pp. 37, 47, and 49; R. Samuel b. Nahmani, Lam. r., Introd., par. 24; R. Hanina b. Isaac, Lam. r. 2. 4 and 2. 18; Pes. r., p. 133 r.



which disappeared or lost their actuality, that the merits of the father will never cease. An anonymous saying which was the source of many liturgical productions in later centuries teaches that God listens to Israel's prayer in exile and brings redemption for the merits of the fathers. He explains, namely, Cant. 8. 14: 'Make haste, My beloved (deliver us) from the exile we are in, and stained by sins. And be thou like to a gazelle,' i. e. cleanse us like a gazelle. Or 'to a young hart', i. e. Thou mayest receive our prayers as substitute for sacrifices. Upon the mountains of spices may the good odour come before Thee for the merit of the fathers; the sweet savour of which ascends before Thee like spices (Cant. r. 8. 15). Even in exile, long after the destruction of the temple, the merit of the fathers protect Israel.

Of a quite different nature was the third objection raised against the doctrine. A very significant passage refers to Ps. 129. 2: 'When thou eatest the labour of thy hands', that is the Proselyte. He has got no Zechuth Aboth, yet we should not say: 'Woe unto me, in spite of all the good I do, since I have no Zechuth Aboth, I have my share merely in this world, but nothing in the world to come! No, he will eat the fruits of his works in both worlds.'<sup>57</sup> There must have been people who thought and taught that without Zechuth Aboth one can have no share in future life. This view was also contradicted by another anonymous writer. To Eccles. 7. 11, 'Good is wisdom with an inheritance', Good is wisdom which can be joined with the merits of the fathers. Happy is he who can trust upon Zechuth Aboth, and upon whose earthly path Zechuth Aboth throws light and blessing.<sup>58</sup> Our Agadist holds that even without Zechuth Aboth one can inherit future life.

The opposition to the doctrine of 'Zechuth Aboth' is to be found in the Gospels. 'And think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham to our father: for I say

<sup>57</sup> Num. r. 8. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Eccles. r. 7. 22.

unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' <sup>59</sup> There might have been Jews who boasted of Abraham and trusted that evil cannot reach them. 'The Zechuth of Abraham cannot save you, others will be called Abraham's seed', was the answer to them. John 8. 38-40 has a similar saying: 'I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that what you have seen with your father.' They answered and said unto him: 'Abraham is our Father.' Luke 16. 21 preserved further the Jewish doctrine that the dead are carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, but to the rich man Abraham says: 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented' (v. 25). <sup>60</sup> In the *Apost. Const.* 8. 41 we find the prayer: Give him his lot in the land of the pious that are sent unto the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. also Pionius, ch. 14). The term of חיקו של אברהם, bosom of Abraham, was, as we see, adopted by the Church. Did the Synagogue know this idea? In the Tanhuma we read: Whosoever is circumcised, does not descend to the Gehinom (v. p. 180). In Gen. r. 48. 7 *R. Levi* says: In the world to come Abraham will sit on the doormat of Gehinom and will not allow a circumcised Jew to enter. *R. Levi*, it seems, endeavours to contradict the teaching of Luke, who draws a distinction between the beggar and rich. There is no Israelite, he means to say, who will not be carried into the bosom of Abraham. The same view is held by the author of the Daniel Apocalypse: Abraham will care for it that all of his seed, all Israelites, shall enter

<sup>59</sup> Matt. 3. 9.

<sup>60</sup> The same idea occurs in the Testament of Abraham (ed. James, p. 72), in the Apocalypse of Zephania (*Zeitschrift für Aegypt. Sprache*, 1886, p. 121); Apoc. Pauli (par. 27. 47); *Acta Andreae et Matthiae* (ed. Tischendorf, *Acta Apoc.*, p. 145); Apocalypse of Daniel (Merx, *Archiv*, I, 425). In early compositions of Art illustrating the Last Judgement, e.g. on the West Portal of S. Isophine of Arles, North Portal of Rheims Cathedral, West front of Lincoln Cathedral, Bourges in the North Choir. In the mediaeval Vision of S. Barontus, c. 700, of Pistoia (*Bollandist Acts*, March 25, p. 370).

into Paradise.<sup>61</sup> In b. Erubin 19 a the same view is expressed. Abraham saves all Jews from Gehinom except those who married heathen women. In the legend of Miriam bath Tanhum and her seven sons, the mother says to the youngest: 'What dost thou want that all of thy brothers shall be put into the bosom of Abraham, except thee?'<sup>62</sup> All these instances show that even the rich man is carried into the bosom of Abraham when he is worthy and of Abraham's seed.

Tertullian reproaches the Jews (*Apologeticum* 21. 5, v. Schrör's *Tertullian's Apologeticum*, p. 21): 'On account of their *great trust in the patriarchs* they are misled from the right path, they turned from their law in a manner which abrogates its holiness and forsook great things.' In the same manner preaches Chrysostom:<sup>63</sup> 'Him then let us also imitate and let us glorify God in all things by a heedful way of life, and *let us not feel confidence in the virtue of our ancestry, knowing the example that has been made of the Jews.*' In all these sayings, which can easily be multiplied, we see the antagonism of the Church to the doctrine of the virtues or merits of the ancestors. Yet, as we saw, there was no need for the scribes to wait for the warnings from outside. The Church itself adopted this teaching of the merits of good deeds before God as formulated by Tertullian and introduced by Cyprian.<sup>64</sup> It appears unjust to throw the burden of the evil consequences which a misunderstood aspect of this doctrine wrought upon the scribes. The Greeks praying before their gods remind us of their ancestors' works or their sacrifices.<sup>65</sup> When Gfrörer (*Jhdt. des Heils*, I<sup>2</sup>, p. 187) says:

<sup>61</sup> Merx, *Archiv*, I, 425.

<sup>62</sup> Pes. r., p. 180 B, v. also Lam. r. 3. 65; Seder Elijah r., ch. 30; b. Gittin, 57 B; *RÉJ.* 54. 138, note 1.

<sup>63</sup> *Hom. Rom.*, p. 356.

<sup>64</sup> v. Wirth, H. Carl, *Der Verdienst-Begriff in der christl. Kirche nach seiner gesch. Entwicklung dargestellt*, 2 vol., Leipzig, 1892-1901; v. Smend, *Lit. Centralblatt*, 1901, no. 1674.

<sup>65</sup> v. Leop. Schmidt, *Die Ethik der Griechen*, I, p. 86; Ausfeld, *De Graecorum precationibus*, pp. 506 a, 526 f; *A. R. W.*, XI, 17 f. 18.

‘It is just in the spirit of a business-like account, which was in the innermost nature of Judaism’<sup>66</sup> to teach such a doctrine, we would remind him of the prayers of Chryses in the introduction of the Iliad, where the allusion to the good works and merits acquired before God is nothing else but barter.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Gfrörer, A. Fr., *Das Jahrhundert des Heils*, II, p. 187.

<sup>67</sup> *A.R.W.*, XI, p. 18; v., however, Luthardt's *Kompendium der Dogmatik*, 1889, p. 290, for the biased Protestant conception. On the development of the doctrine in Islam, v. I. Goldziher, *Le Culte des Ancêtres et le Culte des Morts chez les Arabes* in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, X, No. 2. In the Byzantine literature, v. *Life of St. Xenophon*, ch. 3, the prayer: ‘Remember the works of our ancestors, and for their sake do not let us perish in the depth of the sea.’ *Byz. Zeitschrift*, 19, p. 13.

#### IV

(1) THE merits of the righteous are equal to those of the fathers. זכות הצדיקים is, however, divided into those of men and women. Just as the Rabbis frequently refer to the merits of patriarchs (זכות אבות), and to the merits of the matriarchs (זכות אמהות), so do we find references to the merits of pious women (v. p. 141 ff.). It was often taught that the creation of the world was due to the merits of the righteous. Even one righteous man is sufficient for this purpose. The ideal righteous and just man is able to acquire such merits that the Universe should be created for his sake. A worthy appeal to mankind to be just and righteous! The others, the wicked and indifferent, enjoy the goods and fruits of this world for the merits of the righteous. This doctrine is a noble expression of the fundamental ethics of Jewish religion. The high esteem of each individual soul and of the solidarity of all human beings. Each individual hearer among the audience of those teachers can and should strive to become such a righteous, they meant to say, such a godfearing, good man, that his merits shall benefit the whole world. For his sake the world was created,<sup>1</sup> for his merits the world stands.<sup>2</sup>

The law of solidarity is also shown in another aspect of this teaching. The environment of the righteous benefit by and through the piety and charitable life of the pious. The small shopkeeper with whom Joseph stays becomes prosperous in his business. The prosperity of this man served as a pretext to the 'woman of Memphis' to persuade her husband to acquire Joseph as a slave.<sup>3</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> v. p. 116 f.

<sup>2</sup> v. p. 132 f.

<sup>3</sup> Test. of Joseph, § 3.

Rabbinical literature there are numerous instances of this conception. Lot, Laban, Pharaoh and Rahab are typical examples, illustrating this view. R. Simon ben Jochai in his *Agadah* (v. p. 53) dwells many times on this point. Moses was afraid the merit of Abraham might support Og. Lot became rich and honoured for Abraham's merit. The whole family of Rahab shared in her escape and good fortune. R. Eliezer, the son of R. Jose the Galilean, gives advice to travellers to start the journey when a just man is on the way, for his merit will benefit them (v. p. 58). R. Samuel ben Nahmani illustrates this on the prosperity which Laban and Joseph's master in Egypt enjoyed for the merits of Jacob and Joseph respectively (v. p. 82). R. Isaac teaches that the merits of one righteous person can protect a whole city (v. p. 88). They pray for others, not for themselves, and thereby achieve the salvation of their fellow citizens, they are able to nullify the decrees of heaven by their prayers and avert transient dangers.<sup>4</sup> The scribes disputed whether the merits of the righteous are effective only during their lifetime, or even after their death.<sup>5</sup> The merits of the righteous are applied also in explaining the history of Israel. The redemption was for the merits of the just.<sup>6</sup> Ps. Jonathan Targum, *Exod.* 40. 5 adds: 'And thou shalt set the golden altar for incense before the ark of testimony, for the sake of the wise men who study the Torah, and their smell is pleasant as incense. Put the screen of the door to the tabernacle for the merits of just men, who protect with their merits the people of Israel.' An illustration of this is found in Ps. Jonathan Targum to *Num.* 11. 31. The wind that went forth from the Lord to destroy the world was yet averted by the merit of the righteous, e.g. Moses and Aaron, averted it.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> R. Hanina, b. Sabb. 63 a; Jonathan ben Eliezer, p. 69; Rab, p. 107; Simon ben Lakish, p. 80; R. Abahu, b. M. K. 16 B; R. Berechja, p. 103; R. Abun, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> v. p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> R. Nahmani, p. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Simon ben Lakish b. Joma, 75 B.

Just as one man enjoys the merits of a contemporary righteous man, so likewise a whole generation is protected by the works of a just man. *R. Simon ben Jochai* gives us two instances from the Scriptures, showing us the truth of this case as well as of the opposite one where the righteousness of contemporaries protects against the punishment due to the wickedness of one man. God wanted to destroy the world on account of the wickedness of Jehoiakim, yet He became appeased by considering his contemporaries. On the other hand He wanted to overthrow the world on account of the contemporaries of Zedekiah, yet he became appeased in considering Zedekiah.<sup>8</sup> The teaching is based on Jer. 26. 1 and Jer. 28. 1, where the word בראשית is used, and gave rise to this view. *R. Simon ben Jochai* surely contemplated it saying: 'Sometimes one man saves many, sometimes, however, one man is apt to destroy many.' He shared of course the general view that there is a limit to this world which sooner or later is doomed to perish (v. above, p. 134). The same idea is repeated in another saying of *R. Simon ben Jochai*, to Ps. 36. 7: 'Just as the mountains oppress the flood, to prevent the latter from going up and overflowing the world, so likewise the righteousness (of the just) keeps back a measure of punishment which is about to come to the world.'<sup>9</sup>

The merits of the fathers belong also to this category, for their virtues and merits are really based and established on the same principles and foundations as those of the righteous. They were all of them the bearers of lofty ideals to whom all generations looked up as examples of virtues and godfearing life; their deeds and lives as put

<sup>8</sup> b. Synh. 103 a, by *R. Jochanan*.

<sup>9</sup> Tanh. Buber, I, 34; Agadath Bereschit, 4. 1, ed. Buber, p. 8 f.; Pesikta Buber, p. 73 b; *R. Jonathan in the name of R. Josiah*, Gen. r. 33, M. Ps., p. 250; likewise Lev. r. 27; Tanh. III, 86, anonymously. *R. Josiah* reads instead of צדקה 'charity, righteousness', כן מעשיהם של צדיקים, 'the works of the just'. 'Mountains' are הרים 'here the just. The mountains are the fathers as well as the righteous.

down in the Scripture or pictured by the scribes are an everlasting inspiration to mankind.

(2) We come now to the means by which one acquires merits, by which the fathers of the world and the righteous were distinguished and enabled to become a source of continuous blessing to their contemporaries and posterity, by which children can save their fathers. These are some of the ideals of righteousness of the scribes. Some critics will deny altogether, or find it contradictory, to speak of ideals of the scribes. Those so-called 'whited sepulchres' could have had no ideals! Is not the basis of Rabbinic theology gross materialism, sometimes more or less balanced by a vague mysticism? Those scribes who live in imagination of old and modern theologians, filling the heaven with banking books, angels as clerks and with shop scales, balancing virtues and sins, surely had no ideals! we hear them saying. To describe those ideals would require a voluminous work on Rabbinical theology to which this modest description can offer only an unworthy contribution. We shall therefore confine ourselves to some observations on the merits of faith (אמונה), Torah and study of the Torah, Sabbath and festivals, circumcision and sacrifices, charity and repentance, observances and tithes, tabernacle and Palestine.

(a) *The merits of faith.* There is a general erroneous view abroad held by those who write or speak of Jewish religion, without either consulting or ignoring its sources, which make out that Jewish religion is based on works and not on belief or faith. Those who are wanting in faith are as severely reproached by the scribes as those of little faith in the Gospels.<sup>10</sup> He who says 'What shall I eat to-morrow?' is one of the מחוסרי אמונה according to R. Eleazar of Modiim, the chief champion of the doctrine of the merits of the fathers.<sup>11</sup> 'There is no need', this

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 6. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Mech. 47 B; Sotah, 48 a; Tanh. b. 88 B; Exod. r. 25. 14; cf. Ps. Jon. Targ. Num. 11. 32.



teacher preached, 'to provide for to-morrow, to gather wealth; have faith—and God won't forsake you.' Vividly are those of little faith described by an unknown teacher. When they saw and heard the Egyptians approaching, those of little faith began to pluck their hair, and tear their garments, till Moses soothed them down.<sup>12</sup> In another saying we hear: 'When God created the world He did it only with His word (במאמר), and not by oath. Who caused Him to give an oath? (Deut. 32. 40, 'For I lift up my hand to heaven.') Those who were of little faith.'<sup>13</sup> Hagar is called one of little faith,<sup>14</sup> and Noah by R. Jochanan b. Nappacha,<sup>15</sup> for he delayed to enter the ark till the water reached his knees. In a later source even he who prays loudly is regarded as of little faith.<sup>16</sup> Of Israel, R. Katina says: 'Even in the worst days of Jerusalem there never ceased men of faith.'<sup>17</sup> R. Ami says that rain comes down only for the merits of בעלי אמונה 'believers in God',<sup>18</sup> and illustrates their faith by the story of the weasel and well.<sup>19</sup> Israel believed in God and went after Moses.<sup>20</sup> For the merit of faith so many miracles happened.<sup>21</sup> Abraham inherited both worlds;<sup>22</sup> Israel sang the song at the sea;<sup>23</sup> the Schechinah was resting in Israel;<sup>24</sup> salvation will come to Israel.<sup>25</sup> The merit of faith, especially faithful work, is even more helpful than the merits of fathers.<sup>26</sup>

(b) *The merit of the Torah.* The word and term Torah meant to every Jew everything man holds dear and holy.

<sup>12</sup> Mech. 26 a.

<sup>13</sup> Sifrê, Deut., § 330.

<sup>14</sup> Gen. r. 53. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Gen. r. 32. 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Tanna debe Elijah*, 71 B.

<sup>17</sup> בעלי אמונה, b. Hag. 14 a.

<sup>18</sup> b. Taan. 8 a.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Mech. 15 B.

<sup>21</sup> v. Shemaiah and Abtaljon, p. 37 ff., and Mech. 29 B, 30 a.

<sup>22</sup> Mech. 33 B.

<sup>23</sup> v. p. 56, R. Nehemia.

<sup>24</sup> Exod. r. 2. 22.

<sup>25</sup> v. p. 90, R. Levi, v. Mech. 33 B–34 a.

<sup>26</sup> Tanh. f. 39 B, במקום עומדת באמונה מלאכה שזכותו שוה לזכות אבות לעמוד ש.אין יכול זכות אבות לעמוד

The estimation of and obedience to the Torah, the development and paraphrase of the contents of the Torah, the practical achievement and the theoretical interpretation of its tenets and ideals, show more clearly the history of the Jewish people than persecutions and liberties, worldly successes and temporary disappointments, material conditions and social upheavals. All the latter are merely the framework within which the Torah could develop. Dark dungeons and luxurious palaces, quiet schools and crowded synagogues, jails and places of banquet, testify to the progress as well as to the decline, the triumph as well as the defeat of the Torah. The development and intellectual growth of the Torah is *the* history of the Jewish people. By it one can measure and weigh with just measure and unbiased scales the worth and work of Israel in its own midst as well as in the world at large. There is no Torah without Israel! What is the world without Torah? Just as miserable as a Torahless world is, would be an Israel without Torah. This valuation of the Torah, established by the Agadists, is the keynote of the various doctrines taught about the merits of the Torah in Rabbinical literature. Surely if there is providence in the world, if there is an aim in life, if there is logical and natural purpose in history, the Universe must have been created for the merit of the Torah, and for those who study and spread, deepen and enlarge the ideals laid down therein! For the sake of the Torah and those who study and practise it was the Universe made.<sup>27</sup> The same idea underlies the views expressed by so many Agadists, that the existence and prosperity of the world is due to the merit of the Torah. This was pointed out especially by R. Jochanan, R. Simon ben Lakish, R. Jeremiah, and R. Acha. The world was created on one condition, i. e. if Israel accepts the Torah. If this should not come about, there is no reason for the world to exist. The Torah preceded the creation of the world so many centuries and generations; it was, so to say,

<sup>27</sup> v. p. 124 f.

the 'working vessel' (כלי אומנתו) by means of which the world was created.

The merit of the Torah causes not merely the welfare of Israel, the existence of His peculiar people, but the welfare and being of the whole world and of all the nations depends on the words of the Torah uttered by the school-children.<sup>28</sup> The head and leader of Palestinian Jewry of the third century was well aware that only the education of the coming generations based on the ideals of the Torah can safeguard the world. As a matter of fact there is no Agadist who had not in one form or another emphasized the great duty and high responsibility of teaching and studying, practising and spreading the words of the Torah. Bereft of or spared from all petty political machinations and ambitions, the sages of Israel knew only one aim of life, strove after one ideal: *the Torah*.

Apart from these functions<sup>29</sup> the Torah protects in this and future world.<sup>30</sup> R. Judah I sees in the study of the Torah a life-lengthening and spending merit.<sup>31</sup> Of historical events only R. Nehemia<sup>32</sup> ascribes the redemption from Egypt to the merit of the Torah. The world and life did not appear worth living for except for the merits of the Torah and those who study it.<sup>33</sup> All the worldly success is for the sake of Torah.<sup>34</sup>

Finally we hear that Israel will be redeemed in future for the merit of the study of the Torah, especially of the

<sup>28</sup> b. Synh. 99 B; R. Simon ben Lakish, in the name of R. Judah II.

<sup>29</sup> The merit of the Torah saves from punishments in Hell. R. Hanina b. Hama, Tanh. II, 130 B; Pes. 42 B; Gen. r. 44; M. Ps., ch. 52, end; M. Ps. 19 B; Pes. r., ch. 15; Mech. יתר, ch. 9; Lev. r., ch. 13. Tanh. f. 137 adds the merit of sacrifices, Pes. r. 158 B; Jellinek, *ב"מ*, III, 68.

<sup>30</sup> R. Meir, p. 50; Eleazar b. Shamua, p. 56; Elisha ben Abuja; Aboth of R. Nathan, ch. 29; Sifré, Deut., par. 48; b. Men. 99 B; Menachem ben Jose, p. 61; Jochanan, p. 77; R. Hama b. Hanina, p. 81.

<sup>31</sup> p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> v. p. 144, and also Exod. r. 3. 5.

<sup>33</sup> R. Judan, Cant. 3. 15, 3. 16, 3. 18, *תוכו רצוף, אהבה זו זכות*, תורה ולומדיה.

<sup>34</sup> Exod. r. 2. 6: *הר בשן שכל מה שאדם אוכל בשינוי בזכות תורה*, and R. Eleazar ben Pedath, Gen. r. 69. 3, v. 71. 12.

Oral law. R. Huna says: 'The exiles will not be gathered but for the merit of those who teach the Mishnah.'<sup>35</sup>

(c) *The Observances*: A. *The merit of the Sabbath*. The observance and holiness of the Sabbath day was very early recognized as one of the pillars on which Judaism stands, and the neglect of which brings about its destruction. It is the 'precious gift' (מתנה כזרה) which God kept in His storehouse, and gave to Israel.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the most cruel persecutions<sup>37</sup> and the derision the Jews were exposed to on account of the Sabbath, they adhered all the more to its observance. The teachers, as well as the common people saw in this institution one of the safeguards of the existence of Judaism and of its social-ethical foundations. The Jews in the Diaspora, having no other merits, live for the merit of the Sabbath observance.<sup>38</sup> The merit of Sabbath causes rain to come down,<sup>39</sup> brings joy,<sup>40</sup> and finally the future redemption.<sup>41</sup> An anonymous teacher sees in Zach. 4. 2 ('his seven lamps thereon') the merit of the Sabbath, which Israel observes once in seven days, 'seven pipes to the seven lamps', are the seven days of creation on one side and the seven patriarchs on the other.<sup>42</sup> He taught the view of R. Simon ben Jochai and R. Hijja b. Abba and saw in the words וְנִלְוָה עַל רֵאשֵׁה, a reference to God,<sup>43</sup> who will redeem Israel for the merit of the Sabbath observance.

B. *Circumcision*. The merit of circumcision plays a much greater part in the Agadah than the merit of the Sabbath observance. It resembles the previous observance, however, in two respects. It was also the cause of cruel

<sup>35</sup> Lev. r. 7. 3; Pes. r. 83 B; v. also R. Simon b. Jochai, Lam. r., p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> b. Beza 16 a; b. Sabb. 10 B.

<sup>37</sup> Mechilta 104 B; Sifrê Deut., par. 76.

<sup>38</sup> v. p. 60, and b. Sabb. 119 a.

<sup>39</sup> R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, p. 40; v. also Pes. r. 201 B; b. Erub. 40 B; Eccles. r. 11. 2; Lev. r. 31; Cant. r. 7.

<sup>40</sup> R. Levi.

<sup>41</sup> R. Hijja b. Abba, p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> Pes. r. 29 B.

<sup>43</sup> Reading וְנִלְוָה instead of וְנִלְוָה.

persecutions and subject to ridicule. On account of the latter the great merit of this observance was pointed out, just as that of the Sabbath.<sup>44</sup> Just as the Sabbath observer is immune from Gehinom, so is he who is circumcised.<sup>45</sup> Both observances are equal to all the other commandments of the Torah, and are signs and distinctions granted to Israel by God, not as a punishment, but as the greatest favour. If Israel, therefore, has no other merit, but the adhesion to this commandment, God complies with Israel's requests.<sup>46</sup> Both merits are instrumental in bringing rain,<sup>47</sup> future redemption,<sup>48</sup> forgiveness, atonement from sin,<sup>49</sup> and the possession of the Holy Land.<sup>50</sup> The greatness of this merit is especially emphasized by *R. Joshua ben Korha*.<sup>51</sup> For this merit does the world stand, and <sup>52</sup> Israel was redeemed from Egypt.<sup>53</sup>

*C. Sacrifice.* This merit is greater than that of the fathers.<sup>54</sup> Israel owes its existence to it,<sup>55</sup> and, like for the merits of Sabbath and circumcision, saves from the punishment of Hell.<sup>56</sup> The sacrifices were given so that Israel should be enabled to acquire merits, and not for punishment.<sup>57</sup> Whilst the two previous observances were still practised and performed, this one was merely a matter of memory and theory. The fact that Israel's existence was made

<sup>44</sup> v. Mech. 58 a.

<sup>45</sup> R. Meir, M. Ps. 7 B, לְנִיהַנֵּם אֵינוֹ יוֹרֵד מִהוּלָּה; R. Levi Gen. r. ch. 18. 6 b; Erubin 19 a, v. Tanh. f. 32 a; PSEZ., ed. Friedmann, p. 46.

<sup>46</sup> Lev. r. 31. 4.

<sup>47</sup> v. p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> R. Levi, p. 90.

<sup>49</sup> v. p. 85; R. Abahu as to Sabbath observance, R. Jochanan b. Sabb. 119 B, R. Berechja, Eccles. r. 1. 3; Ps. Jon. Targ. Num. 23. 10.

<sup>50</sup> R. Judan, Gen. r. 46. 7.

<sup>51</sup> v. p. 59.

<sup>52</sup> R. Meir, p. 50.

<sup>53</sup> Matja ben Cheres, p. 47; Simon ben Jochai, p. 53; Simon ben Halaftha, p. 63, the great miracle on the Red Sea happened; Simon of Teman, p. 47, v. also Pes. r. 63 B; Tanh. וִירָא, 4; Pirke of R. Eliezer, ch. 29; Targ. Ezek. 15. 6.

<sup>54</sup> v. R. Hanina b. Hama, p. 67.

<sup>55</sup> v. p. 81, R. Hama b. Hanina and b. Taanith, 27 B.

<sup>56</sup> v. the passages, Index, s.v. Hell.

<sup>57</sup> v. p. 87, Hijja bar Abba.

dependent on it is one of the many proofs of the doctrine of merits having been available and emphasized by the Apologists of the first four centuries. To the greater part of the Stoic philosophers as well as to the Fathers of the Church, sacrifices appeared as an unworthy form of worship. The former fought against it and ridiculed it, the latter used it for dogmatic reasons. They thought: If sacrifices are abolished and antiquated, why should people adhere to Sabbath observance and circumcision? There are other means by which man can be justified. The older legislation ordered sacrifices merely as a punishment for the people's sins. 'No,' replied the scribes, 'they were never meant in this sense. Their purpose was to enrich Israel with merits, for the sake of which Israel exists.'

All this applies, of course, not only to these but to the observances generally. 'All the commandments were given,' says R. Judah ben Ilai, 'for no other reason and with no other aim than to make Israel worthy to share the future life.'<sup>58</sup> His contemporary, R. Jose ben Halaftha, singled out certain observers of a few commandments whose portion in the world to come is assured.<sup>59</sup> Every man who performs one of God's commandments acquires a defender for himself in heaven.<sup>60</sup> According to Menachem ben Jose the observances can protect merely in this world and not in the world to come.<sup>61</sup> In opposition to this view is that of R. Jonathan ben Eliezer, who speaks of the future influence of the performed observances.<sup>62</sup> The same teaching stands also in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi.<sup>63</sup> This shows clearly that opinions differed whether the observances can protect in the world to come just as in this world, yet all agree in one point that they were given to Israel, not for punishment, but to acquire merits through them.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> v. p. 16.

<sup>59</sup> v. p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> v. p. 57, Eliezer ben Jacob.

<sup>61</sup> v. p. 60 f.

<sup>62</sup> v. p. 68.

<sup>63</sup> v. p. 72 f.

<sup>64</sup> v. Tanh. III, p. 98; Lev. r. 30. 13.

For the merit of slaughtering the Paschal lamb, teaches R. Ishmael, revealed God himself unto Israel.<sup>65</sup> An anonymous teacher goes even further and proves from various passages that Israel does not exist in the world except for the merit of observing God's commandments, based on Num. 23. 10: 'Who is able to count the dust of Jacob?' i.e. the various observances Israel performs with dust, v. Deut. 22. 9-10.<sup>66</sup> R. Isaac assumes that for the merit of taking the fruit of goodly trees, &c. (Lev. 23. 40) God will redeem Israel, avenge it, build the temple, and send the Messiah.<sup>67</sup> Thus, either the observances generally or some of them especially were singled out to show the great results and the effects they can bring about by these works. R. Hanin, for instance, speaks of the observance of kindling the perpetual light as the merit which brings the days of the Messianic Age nearer to mankind.<sup>68</sup> In the same sense is to be understood the homily of R. Meir,<sup>69</sup> when he assumes that the Holy Spirit is tabernacled with him who acquires the merit of hospitality, or, when R. Simon ben Jochai<sup>70</sup> states that the resurrection of the dead will come about by this merit.

The scribes emphasized another commandment, i.e. of the tithes, which throws light upon the methods and aims the Agadists pursued on the one side, and of the influence and effect of their teaching on the other side. It is an established historical fact that the Jews in Palestine, long after the destruction of the Temple, tithed their fruits and observed the laws concerning the tithe.<sup>71</sup> This was achieved by the continuous teaching that the patriarchs were blessed

<sup>65</sup> Mech. 8 a. 12 a.

<sup>66</sup> Pes. r. 41 B; Num. r. 20. 16; Tanh. IV, p. 143, adds: Num. 19. 9; Lev. 19. 23; Num. 5. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Gen. r. 63. 10, v. p. 87 f.

<sup>68</sup> v. p. 99.

<sup>69</sup> v. p. 50.

<sup>70</sup> v. p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> v. Eccles. r. 11. 24; Lam. r. 1. 62; Zemach ben Paltoi, v. בפתור ופרח, ed. Lunz, I, p. 360; הלכות פסוקות, ed. Müller, n.; v. on the subject Büchler, *Der gal. Am ha-Arez*, 1906, p. 27, note.

for the merit of the tithe.<sup>72</sup> The Jews in Palestine live for the merit of the tithe.<sup>73</sup> Joy comes to Israel for this merit.<sup>74</sup> Other Agadists like R. Joshua ben Levi, R. Jochanan, R. Samuel b. Nahmani, and R. Levi, refer to the merit of waving the sheaf of the Omer. For this merit did Abraham, and later Israel, inherit the Holy Land, Israel was saved in the time of Gideon (v. Judges 7. 13), of Hezekiah and of Mordecai.<sup>75</sup> The waving of the sheaf had certainly a deeper meaning. Allegorically it expressed nothing less than the acknowledgment of God's Omnipresence and Might.<sup>76</sup> In the same way the idea of tithes implied that we owe everything to God and act merely as God's appointed trustees in helping the needy.

*D. Charity and Lovingkindness.* It was proverbial in Palestine that doing charity acquires merits. The usual phrase was: 'Acquire merits through me' (v. p. 6 and notes). R. Akiba points out the great merit of charity. He who gives charity to the poor gives a present to God, even if he sinned, and his judgement be given and sealed, the merit of charity will save him.<sup>77</sup> R. Meir teaches that charity lengthens life (v. p. 50); his colleague R. Judah b. Ilai regards this merit as a means of future redemption.<sup>77 a</sup> The merit of charity makes even the sinner worthy to see the Shechina.<sup>78</sup> This merit of almsgiving is described in the same way by the author of the book of Tobit.<sup>79</sup> 'Almsgiving redeems from hell.'<sup>79 a</sup>

If we mention only briefly the merits of repentance,<sup>80</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Gen. r. 43. 10; Pes. r. 127 B; Tanh. f. 22 a, and Index, s.v. Tithe.

<sup>73</sup> v. p. 60.

<sup>74</sup> R. Levi, p. 90.

<sup>75</sup> v. Index, s.v. Omer, and Lev. r. 28. 6; Pes. 71 a, b; Pes. r. 92 a, b; b. Meg. 16 a; Esther r. 10, ed. Buber, p. 40.

<sup>76</sup> v. Pesikta, p. 70 B; R. Jose ben Hanina and R. Joshua ben Levi.

<sup>77</sup> Midrash Cant. r., ed. Buber, p. 19.

<sup>77 a</sup> v. M. Cant. r., p. 70.

<sup>78</sup> M. Ps. 15 B, ed. Buber, p. 135, based on Isa. 40. 5.

<sup>79</sup> XII, 9, v. Hughes, *Ethics of the Apocrypha*, p. 44.

<sup>79 a</sup> *Midrash* in מוסר, p. 4 a.

<sup>80</sup> By which Job was pardoned, v. R. Akiba, p. 44, or the future redemption will come, R. Jochanan and R. Simon ben Lakish, p. 78.



of the Tabernacle,<sup>81</sup> and of Palestine,<sup>82</sup> we have the catalogue of the most important merits nearly completed. These merits are based on three general principles which are the bases of Judaism. We mean *Faith, Work, and Love*. He who acquires merits is justified by faith. Faith alone, of course, was not sufficient, just as works without faith are valueless. Both must be united. They are inseparable. Faith in God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the *Omnipresent*, the *Omniscient*, the *Omnipotent*, is the basis of Judaism. Without these one cannot be a Jew, just as it is impossible to be a Christian without belief in Christ, or a Moslem without believing in Muhammed. Even faith must be taught and learnt, otherwise it is corrupted by superstition and idolatry on the one hand, and on the other hand it must be translated into works. The Torah teaches faith which a Jew has to believe, and leads us to works by which this belief can be kept fresh and alive. Faith must inspire man to action, and work must express this faith. The climax of both joined together is lovingkindness or charity. Rabbinical Judaism created and practised this virtue towards Jews and Gentiles. That charity is a virtue at all is one of the greatest glories and achievements of the *Jewish religion*. The genius of Judaism has endowed the world with institutions for the poor and needy, the sick and unhappy; has imposed upon humanity legislation and care for the suffering and unfortunate, and 'has assigned the highest place among human excellencies to charity'.<sup>83</sup> Is there in the world or nature an empty space in thought and work, in life and death, which *Judaism* has not filled with charity?

<sup>81</sup> By which the world stands, R. Simon ben Jochai, p. 53; R. Samuel b. Nahmani, p. 82, and blessing comes to the world, R. Joshua ben Levi, p. 72.

<sup>82</sup> v. b. Maccoth 7 a; Pes. r. 2 a.

<sup>83</sup> In spite of Wundt, *Ethik*, I, p. 251.

As a counterpart of the doctrine of subsidiary merits the scribes speak of and teach also imputed sins. Just as the merits of the fathers benefit their offspring, just as the merits of the children save their parents, just as the merits of the righteous protect and deliver their fellow men, so do the righteous suffer death and plague for the sins of their wicked contemporaries, likewise do fathers die for their children's evil deeds, and children are suffering for the iniquities of their parents. When *R. Jochanan* was visited by his pupils, they found him crying, they said: 'Our master, if thou art crying, what will happen to us?' *R. Jochanan* replied: 'My sons, should I not cry, being aware that I will soon be placed before my judges, and shown all my deeds.' Moreover, I shall be asked: 'Why did thy sons die during thy lifetime? and I was found unworthy to contribute my share to the establishment of the world! finally, those whose children die during their lifetime, will be brought to account.'<sup>1</sup>

An Agadist interpreting the words of Jacob, 'For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning' (Gen. 37. 35) says: 'What is the meaning of "mourning into the Sheol?" I will die the *death of the wicked* in this world, and in the world to come. Why? Because God had promised me twelve tribes, and now one of them is dead, may be I was found unworthy to live in both worlds.'<sup>2</sup> This Agadist held that the death of children during the lifetime of parents comes about through the sins of the parents, and

<sup>1</sup> Friedmann's *PSEZ.*, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Tanh. B. I.*, 209.

they are responsible for it. *Ps. Jonathan Targum* renders Gen. 46. 30 in the following way: 'And Israel said to Joseph: In case I die now, I would be comforted, for I die the death of the *righteous*.' Another Agadist left us a similar remark, when he explained Ps. 62. 13 (for Thou renderest to every man according to his work) by the following instance: There is a young man who has sown his wild oats (בחור ולק בעבירה), and becomes guilty of death. What does God? He waits till he marries and begets children, and takes away one of his children for the sin the father committed.<sup>3</sup> This is taught also by R. Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and R. Joshua ben Hananja. Other rabbis enumerate different sins, on account of which young children and women die or suffer.<sup>4</sup> R. Hama b. Hanina is represented by the saying that Adam met with death for the sins of future generations.<sup>5</sup> This view is also widespread in the Agadah. We find, for instance, that Abraham died prematurely because of Esau's sins. The aspect must have been popular.<sup>6</sup> Finally we hear that plague and suffering come for the just and unjust alike for the sins of the Am ha-Arez.<sup>7</sup> Abraham was not visited by God as long as Lot stayed with him.<sup>8</sup> The righteous are taken away

<sup>3</sup> M. Ps., ed. B., p. 308.

<sup>4</sup> R. Meir, p. 50; R. Eleazar ben Simon, p. 60; R. Nathan, p. 62; R. Judah, I, p. 62; R. Jochanan, p. 78; Eleazar ben Pedath, p. 85; Hijja bar Abba, p. 87; cf. Spiegel, Fr., *Eranische Altertumskunde*, III, p. 100, and Büchler, A., *Der galiläische Am ha-Arez*, p. 199. 2.

<sup>5</sup> v. p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> The popularity of this aspect can be judged from the formulary ברך שפטרני מעונשו של זה, the father says even nowadays, when his son is called up to the Torah on the occasion of the מצוה בר מצוה. The origin of the custom goes back to the saying of R. Eleazar ben Pedath (Gen. r. 63. 14) א"ר אלעזר צריך אדם להטפל בבנו עד י"ג שנה מכאן (Gen. r. 63. 14) ואילך צריך שיאמר ברך שפטרני מעונשו של זה עד י"ג שנה הבן לוקה. R. Hijja b. Abba (v. p. 87, n. 234) teaches just the opposite view: בעון האב. It is not impossible that R. Eleazar, a Babylonian by birth, adopted the Persian view; v. Spiegel, l. c., p. 700, cf. b. Ket. 50 a.

<sup>7</sup> v. p. 62, R. Judah I.

<sup>8</sup> Jose ben Zimra, p. 70.

for the sins of their generation.<sup>9</sup> It became even proverbial Tobiah sinned, Zigud was punished.<sup>10</sup>

Both imputed sins and merits are based on the idea of human solidarity, as *R. Simai* explained it: 'Why has God created just *and* wicked people? In order that they shall atone for each other. Rich and poor, so that they may help one another.'<sup>11</sup> This solidarity is to be seen in man's and woman's every walk of life. A man or a woman cannot sin or do good without influencing either for good or bad one's fellow. It is further felt among members of one and the same family.<sup>12</sup> One cannot disgrace himself or be praised without bringing shame or causing pride to his family or tribe. One Israelite cannot sin without endangering the whole nation.<sup>13</sup> This is the reason why the innocent suffer for the wicked and *vice versa*, why the latter share the blessing caused by the former. But the idea of solidarity is not limited to one nation, it covers all members of the human family. This is shown admirably by *R. Joshua ben Levi*. If Israel sins, the Gentiles suffer with them, just as they partake of all the fruits of Israel's merits. The Gentiles themselves are not without merits. Apart from the righteous among them, who have a position in the future life, there reference is frequently made to the merits of the Gentiles.<sup>14</sup> God seeks for merits even among Gentiles,<sup>15</sup> some of them trust upon the merits of Abraham

<sup>9</sup> *R. Simon ben Lakish*, p. 80; *Samuel b. Nahmani*, p. 82; *Simlai*, p. 82; *Eleazar ben Pedath*, p. 85; *Berechja*, p. 103; v. however, *Tanh. IV. B.*, p. 24, אלא בשעה שהדור מכעים לפניו הוא ממלט את הצדיקים. ומאכר את הרשעים. According to *Rab. R. Hanina b. Hama*, *R. Jonathan ben Eliezer*, and *R. Habiba*, the righteous are taken away for neglecting to admonish or rebuke their contemporaries; v. *b. Sabbath*, p. 54 b; cf. *Augustine, De civ. dei*, I, 9, the very same idea.

<sup>10</sup> v. p. 93, n. 278.

<sup>11</sup> *Pes. B.*, p. 191 a; *R. Tanhum b. Hija*, p. 191 b; v. *Eccles. r.* 7. 30.

<sup>12</sup> v. *R. Simon ben Jochai*, p. 54; v. also *M. Ps.*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> v. *Hezekiah b. Hija*, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> v. *Index, Gentiles*.

<sup>15</sup> v. *Index, s.v. Gentiles*.

their ancestor,<sup>16</sup> they get their reward for their merits in this world,<sup>17</sup> Rome's might was due to Esau's merit.<sup>18</sup>

And, finally, if there are no merits among men, Israel or Gentiles alike, then God does mercy for the sake of the cattle.<sup>19</sup> There is a kind of solidarity not only between the members of one family, one race, one nation and humanity, but even between the latter and the animal world, between the different parts of God's creation, the higher and lower. Sometimes the latter are protected for the merits of the former. Yet there are cases when humanity is barren of merits, and God takes pity on the human race for the sake of the brute-creation. That happens, as in the case of the Alexander story, when justice and right are trampled under the heels of violence and might!

<sup>16</sup> R. Jochanan, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> v. Samuel ben Nahmani, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> v. Index, Esau and Rome.

<sup>19</sup> v. the Alexander story, Tamid. 32 a; Gen. r. 33. 1; Lev. r. 27. 1; j. B. M. 8 a; *Midrash Ten Kings*, Pesikta 73 a; v. R. Isaac, Jalk. Hos. 533, בנוהג שבעולם אדם נכשל בעבירה הוא מתחייב עליה מיתת שמים מת שורו אברה תרנגלתו נשברה צלוחיתו נכשל באצבעו ומקצת הנפש ככל הנפש.

## NOTES

Page 3. *R. Simon ben Rabbi* gives *M. Macc.* (III. 15) 23 B an instance of negative merits, saying: גזל ועריות שנפשו של אדם מתאוה להן ומחמדתן הפורש מהן על אחת כמה וכמה שיוכה לו ול דורותיו ולדורי דורותיו עד סוף כל הדורות, i. e. man is rewarded for not doing a thing, which appears to him abominable, how much more should he acquire merits by avoiding forbidden, but desirable things. The same idea recurs in a statement made by *Rabbi Eleazar ben Azarja*: Whence do we derive that one should not say, 'I do not like to wear a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together! I do not like to eat pig-meat! I do not want to forbid intermarriage!' but he should say, 'I would like to do it! yet, what I can I help, my Father in Heaven has decreed upon me not to do thus!' therefore it is said, 'I have set you apart from the peoples' (Lev. 20. 24). We find here that he, who says so, separates himself from transgression, and receives upon himself the Kingdom of Heaven (*Sifra*, p. 82 B). The same teacher gives two examples for accumulating merits unconsciously or unintentionally, for instance, the Egyptians (*Deut.* 23. 8, v. *Sifrê Deut.* § 225) and a man who dropped money found by poor people (*Sifrê Deut.* § 283, v. *Sifra*, 25 B, 26 A). *R. Akiba* relates a case of unconscious sin in *Semaḥot* 4. 34: אמר ר' עקיבא: זו היתה תחלת זכותי לפני חכמים, השכמתי ומצאתי הרוג אחד והייתי מטפל בו בג' תחומי שבת עד שהבאתי למקום קבורה וקברתי, וכשבאתי והרצתי דברי לפני חכמים אמרו לי על כל פסיעה ופסיעה שהיית פוסע מעלין עליך כאילו שפכת דמים דנתי קלוחומר בעצמי ומה אם עכשיו שנתכוונתי לזכות הטאתי לרבות [לרבויות] מעונותי אלו נתכוונתי על אחת כמה וכמה, וכשהיה אדם מדבר זה לפני ר' עקיבא היה אומר זה ומצאתי מת (2); תחלת תשמישי (1) j. *Nazir* 56 a reads (1) תחלת זכותי וכשבאתי אצל ר' אליעזר ור' יהושע (3); מצוה ונטפלתי בו כארבעת מיל בשעה שלא נתכוונתי לזכות (5); ולזכות נתחייבתי (4) b. *Kid.* 82 B has a different version: ר' עקיבא כי מטא להאי פסוקא הוה בכי:

אמר ומה מי שנתכוין לאכול בשר חזיר ועלה בידו בשר טלה אמרה תורה צריכה כפרה וסליחה מי שנתכוין לאכול בשר חזיר ועלה בידו בשר חזיר על אחת כמה וכמה (v. j. Nazir 53 a in the name of R. Jacob.) כיוצא בדבר אתה אומר ולא ידע ואשם ונשא עונו כשהיה ר' עקיבא מגיע לפסוק זה היה בוכה. ומה מי שנתכוין לאכול שומן ועלה בידו חלב אמרה תורה ולא ידע ואשם ונשא עונו מי שנתכוין לאכול חלב ועלה בידו חלב על אחת כמה וכמה. From the Palestinian sources we can gather R. Akiba's feeling at the reading of these passages. His experience moved him to tears as often as he thought of that event in his life.

Page 6. The saying זכי בי occurs in Lev. r. 34. 7, where R. Zeira praises the style of the Palestinian Jews: אפי' שיחתן של בני ארץ ישראל תורה הא כיצד אדם או מר לחבירו זכי בי או רכי בי (v. p. 93); Lev. r. 34. 1. R. Jonah says: It is not said, 'Happy is he that *giveth* unto the poor', but 'Happy is he that *considereth* the poor'. Consider how you can acquire merits through him. J. Sabb. 8 d: תרין תלמידין מן דר' חנינא הוין נפקין: מקטוע ביסין חמתין חדא איסטרוֹלוגום אמר אילין תרין מי נפקין ולא חזרין, מן נפקין פגע בהון חד סב אמר לון: זכו עמי דאית לי תלתא יומין חד בר נש אתא גבי חד מן קריבוי: j. Taanit 64 b. דלא טעמית כלום דר' יוני א"ל ר' זכה עימי. These four instances may suffice to show the spirit and meaning of Jewish charity. The well-to-do, who shares his money or bread with the poor, is indebted to the latter for the opportunity to acquire merits.

Modern expounders of the Agadah found in Jeroboam the prototype for the Gnostic *Marcion*, v. J. Oppenheim, המגיד, 1875, col. 436; הַתַּחֲלִיל מִפְתָּה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, *ibid.*; 1893, p. 160, v. esp. j. A. Z. 1. 1, האסיף, Lam. r. ed. Buber, p. 53 a; my ed. of *Midrash Haseerot we Yeteroth*, p. 53, note 232: further, M. Ps. 7 a, ed. Buber, p. 56. *R. Hanina b. Papa*: שהוּא (1 Kings 11. 29) פתר קריא בירבעם. ושניהם לברם בשדה (1 Kings 11. 29) שקול באחיה השילוני, שישבו לברר מעשי מרכבה, ועמדו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב"ה ואמרו לפניו אדם שהוא עתיד להעמיד שני עגלים, את מגלה לו מעשה מרכבת, אמר להן עכשיו מה הוא צדיק או רשע? אמרו לו צדיק, אמר להן איני הן את האדם אלא לפי שעזו *Marcion* really dealt in his system with the subject of מרכבה, v. W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen, 1907, p. 109 f. On Achiah השילוני, v. p. 52, and Pes. B., p. 23 a; b. Taan. 20 a.

Page 7. R. Simon ben Eleazar's saying may appear clearer if we compare it with the Persian conception, which taught that even in the future world people will be treated according to their merits or demerits (v. Spiegel, Fr., *Eranische Altertumskunde*, II, p. 103). The scribe points out in opposition to that view, which may have influenced large sections of Jewry in the East, that Judaism does not share this doctrine. Weber, *System der alt-synagogalen paläst. Theologie*, p. 362, reads into R. Simon ben Eliezer's saying something the scribe surely never thought of.

Page 8. The conception of happy and unhappy days is to be found with many nations. The Greeks call them *δρύματα*, v. *Rhein. Mus.* 27. 635; *Byz. Zeitschrift*, 17. 552; Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 4th ed., p. 70 f.; Fr. Pradel, *Griechische Gebete*, p. 102; *Zeitschrift des Vereines für Volkskunde*, I, pp. 200, 219; Güdemann, M., *Geschichte des jüd. Erziehungswesens in Deutschland*, p. 131. 2; *Magazin*, XV, p. 146; v. also *R. Akiba*, b. Cant. 65 B; b. Ket. 107 B; *R. Bibi*, Esther r. 1. 2.

Page 11. Men who prayed successfully for others are enumerated by Kohler, *J.Q.R.*, 3 (1901), p. 567; v. additions in Büchler's *Der galil. Am ha-Arez*, p. 336, n. 1. To אנשי מעשה, cp. *PSEZ.*, ed. Friedmann, p. 6: מעשה באדם אחד שירד מגליל העליון לעשות מלאכה בדרום אמרו עליו על אותו האדם אעפ"י שלא קרא ולא שנה מאנשי מעשה הוה. v. b. Sabb. 127 B; v. Friedmann's note, 24.

Page 31. The story of Pentakaka is given j. Taan. 64 B איתחמי לר' אבהו פנטקקה יצלי ואתי מיטרא נחית מיטרא שלח ר' אבהו ואייתיהו שאל חמר עבין ההוא גברא עביד ההוא גברא בכל יום, מיגר זנייתא, משפר תיטרון, מעיל מניהון לבני, מטפח ומרקד קדמיהון ומקיש בבוייא קדמיהון, א"ל ומה טיבו עבדית, א"ל חד זמן הו' ההוא גברא משפר תיטרון, אתה הדה איתא וקמת לה חורי עמודא בכייה, ואמרת לה מה לך ואמרה לי בעלה דההיא איתתא חביש ואנא בעיא מיחמי מה מעביד ומפני' חבנית ערסא ופרים ערסי ויהבית ליה טימיתיה וא"ל הא לך פניי בעליך ולא תיחמיי א"ל כדיי את מצלייא ומתענייא, v. Graetz, *Geschichte*, IV, 4, p. 285. This event brings home to us the meaning of a saying by R. Abahu in Agad. Bereshit, ed. Buber, p. 163: א"ר אבהו לעתיד לבוא עתידין הכל להיות תמהין כנגד מי ששמעו להקב"ה ואומר [ואומרין r.]: מה הוא כך פלוני שישב ולא שנה מימיו ולא קרא מימיו והרי הוא יושב עם האבות, ומסיה עמהו, והקבה אומר להן. מה



לכם תמיהין, לא זכי אלו אלא מפני ששמעו לי בחייהן, שנ' אוון שומעת (Prov. 15. 31). The example of this Pentakaka may have produced *R. Jochanan's* description of Esau, who committed on one day *five* great sins (b. B. B. 16 B, v. p. 86, note 227). Of *Saul* we hear in the Agadah (Pes. 74 a; Pes. r. 64 a; M. Sam., ed. B, p. 97; Num. r. 11. 3; Tos. Ber., ch. 4) that he did five good deeds: ועץ חיים תאוה באה זה שאול שנמשך ומלך מיד. בזכות מי בזכות שהיה מעשים טובים שהיו בידו, שהיה עניו שהיה אוכל חולין במהרה, שהיה מבובז את ממונו, כדי (שחם) לחום על ממונם של ישראל, ששקל כבוד עבדו בכבוד עצמו.

Page 39. The number 18 is often applied in the Agadah; for instance, the 18,000 worlds, v. b. Hag. 12 a; *R. Jose b. Hanina*, j. Sanh. 20c; Pes. B. 169 a; Eccles. r. 2. 8; Eccles. z., p. 90; Cant. r. 1. 10; *R. Levi*: י"ח שנה היתה בתקול יוצאת, ומכרות בפלטין של נבוכדנצר ואומרת עבדא בישא זול ואחרב ביתה דמרך, Eccles. z., p. 129.

Page 40. That pious gentiles have also a share in future life is expressed in Sifre Deut. § 311: ד"א בהנחל עליון גוים כשהנחיל המקום מן האומות יראי חטא וכשרים שבהם בהפיריו בני אדם זה לזו.

Page 61. To Hananja ben Akasia v. above, p. 16, and Friedmann's *Ps. Seder Eliahu Zuta*, p. 21, ch. 2, note 46.

Page 69, note 136. The conception that the man of great merits, a righteous, is able to annul the decrees of Heaven, is expressed by R. Jonathan ben Eliezer in the words: כל המלמד את בן חבריו תורה זוכה ויושב בישיבה, וכל המלמד את בן עם הארץ את בן חבור תורה זוכה ויושב בישיבה, וכל המלמד את בן עם הארץ תורה אפילו הקב"ה גוזר גזירה מבטלה בשבילו. A similar statement is made by *R. Assi*, or according to some readings by *R. Hanina*, b. Sabb. 63 a, with reference to a man who performs the commandments punctually: אפילו הקב"ה גוזר גזירה מבטלה. *R. Abahu* says (b. M. K. 16 B) as to 2 Sam. 23. 3 (the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God). ה"ק אמר אלהי ישראל לי דבר צור ישראל אני מושל באדם, מי מושל בי צדיק שאני גוזר גזירה (והוא מבטלה). *R. Ami* teaches also that the prayer of a pious (חסיד) causes rain to come down in times of dearth and need (v. b. Tann. 8 a, בתפלה עליו בתפלה, v. also Cant. r. 1. 16; Pes. 102 b).

Page 75, line 5. It is doubtful whether *R. Jochanan* really

took part in the discussion of the problem: When did the merits of the father cease to help? b. Sabb. 55 a has **ורבי יוחנן אמר מימי** b. Sabb. 55 a has **ורבי יוחנן אמר מימי** **חזקיה**, yet this view contradicts another saying of R. Jochanan, who explains the word **חזקיה** in Ezek. 9. 4 with **חזקיה אבות** (v. Tossafoth, s.v. **אמר** **ושמואל**). We have to read *R. Jonathan* instead of R. Jochanan. Lev. r. 36. 5 gives this view (**ער חזקיה**) in the name of *R. Judan* (v. also j. Synh. 27 d).

Page 83. The names of **ר' אלעזר** and **ר' אילעאי** are often interchanged; for instance, Pes. B. 30 a, **ר' ברכיה בשם ר' אלעאי**, v. MS. Oxf. Lev. r. 26. 1; Gen. r. 32, **בשם ר' אלעזר**; Jalk. Ex. 370, **א"ר אלעאי**; and v. MS. Adler 2841; v. Praetorius, *ZDMG.* 51 (1903), p. 528, and Büchler, *Der gal. Am ha-Arez*, p. 130. 2.

Page 85, 220. v. Büchler, *The Political and Social Leaders*, &c., p. 42. 2.

Page 93, note 278. v. b. Pes. 113 b and **שערי תשובה**, § 8, p. 2 B.



# INDEX

N, letter, 125.

Aaron, merits of, 7, 56, 61, 65, 76, 88, 89, 103, 133, 143, 145.

R. Abahu, 77, 173; 83, 85, 85, 219; 90, 261; 120, 123, 134, 76; 149, 10; 163, 45; 173, 4; 180, 49; 191, 192.

Abba Saul, 39, 8.

R. Abba b. Hanina, 105.

R. Abba b. Kahana, 21, 83, 88, 237; 91, 113, 133, 136, 139.

Abba b. Zabda, 92, 154.

Abbaji, 133, 70;

Abishai, 85.

Abraham, 8, 13, 37, 38, 43, 47, 52, 53, 56, 57, 59, 63, 64, 65, 67, 70, 75, 76, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 273; 99, 100, 103, 105, 121 f., 134 f., 140, 144, 145, 161.

Abtaljon, 37, 42, 47, 56, 64, 95, 145, 165, 176, 21;

R. Abun, 14, 103, 109, 139, 152, 173, 4;

R. Acha I, 64.

R. Acha II, 16, 70, 141; 92, 271; 100, 102, 309; 105, 331; 113, 14; 125, 133, 142, 94; 146, 152, 177.

R. Acha b. Abba, 113.

R. Acha b. Hanina, 93, 167.

Achaz, 70, 93, 159.

Achja השיילי, 52, 190.

R. Ada b. Ahaba, 107, 155.

Adam, 62, 67, 68, 81, 135 f., 186.

age (of 100), 54, 58, 159.

Ahab, 11.

Ahaba b. Zeira, 104.

Ahasuerus, 129.

R. Aibo, 98, 118, 167.

R. Akiba, 8, 9, 16; 10, 34, 35, 44, 45, 46, 47, 55, 65, 141, 145, 147, 156, 183, 183, 180; 189, 191.

R. Alexander, 18, 6; 19, 70, 143; 73, 77, 173; 163.

Am ha-Arez, 62, 69, 160, 186.

Amalek, 41, 75.

R. Ami, 83, 90, 176, 192.

Amon, 93, 159.

Amorites, 39.

angels, 9, 10, 12, 58, 67, 85, 221; 92, 272; 145, 151, 160, 169.

Apion, 130 f., 142.

apologetics, 16, 27, 50, 61, 69, 71, 79, 97, 111 f., 130, 137, 142, 181.

Aristides of Athens, 108, 129.

R. Assi, 192.

astrology, 140, 190.

atonement, 8, 11; 72, 80, 83, 85, 86, 87, 90, 99, 100, 102, 103, 105, 149 f., 161, 180.

R. Avira, 44, 26; 47, 141, 91.

R. Azarja, 92, 274; 103, 122, 149, 10.

ז, letter, 125.

Balaam, 63, 75, 114.

banquet (parable), 46, 59, 120, 135.

Bar Kappara, 21, 62, 65, 161 (*see also* Eleazar ha Kappara).

beams (parab.), 136.

R. Benaah, 47, 64, 65, 125, 141.

Benjamin, 55, 72.

R. Berechja, 13, 14, 73, 154; 84, 214; 88, 237; 89, 247; 102, 113, 124, 140, 145, 169, 173, 4; 180, 49.

Beruria, 131.

R. Bibi ben Abba, 76, 191.

birth of son, sign for atonem., 163.

books, of merits, 99.

bosom of Abraham, 169.

Buddhist systems on m., 29.

Caesarea, 69, 86.

Canaan, 7.

cattle (beasts, birds), 59, 61, 64, 73, 117, 188.

change of names or lang., 62, 141.

charity, 21, 48, 50, 54, 55, 86, 90, 183, 190.

charms, 104.

chastity, 63, 69.

- Chrysostomus, 170.  
 circumcision, 40, 47, 48, 50, 53, 55,  
     59, 63, 77, 85, 90, 99, 101, 126 f.,  
     133, 143 f., 179 f.  
 cities of the coast, 99.  
 Clementine Recognitions, 109.  
 creation of the world, for whose  
     merit, 108-28.  
 crossing the sea and Jordan, for  
     whose merit, 144 f.  
  
 Daniel, 78.  
 David, 7, 11, 78, 91, 94, 107, 133.  
 days, happy and unhappy, 8, 191.  
 death of child, sign of sin, 185 f.  
 decrees of God, 69, 104, 107, 192.  
 deliverance from Egypt, 139-44.  
 dew, 79, 90.  
 Diognetus, letter, 108.  
 disease (parab.), 72.  
  
 eighteen (number in the Ag.), 39,  
     192.  
 R. Eleazar b. Abuna, 125.  
 R. Eleazar b. Achwai, 64.  
 R. Eleazar b. Azarja, 33, 43, 65, 140,  
     189.  
 R. Eleazar b. Jose, 61, 69.  
 R. Eleazar b. Judah, בִּרְתוּמָה, 47,  
     65, 145.  
 R. Eleazar ha Kappar, 141 (*see also*  
     Bar Kappara).  
 R. Eleazar of Modiim, 10, 41, 65, 146,  
     154, 24; 175.  
 R. Eleazar b. Pedath, 34, 67, 67, 123;  
     70, 141; 75, 77, 77, 173; 83, 84,  
     213; 105, 329; 120, 130, 133, 139,  
     145, 146, 162, 178, 34; 186, 6;  
     193.  
 R. Eleazar b. Shamua, 56, 65, 84,  
     211; 132, 178.  
 R. Eleazar b. Simon, 52, 53, 60, 119,  
     159.  
 R. Eleazar b. Zadok, 39.  
 Eli, high priest, 50.  
 R. Eliezer b. Hyrkanos, 40, 148, 179,  
     39; 186.  
 R. Eliezer b. Jacob, 57, 61, 65, 69,  
     139, 160, 181.  
 R. Eliezer b. R. Jose ha Gelili, 57,  
     154, 25; 173.  
 Elimelech, 60.  
 Elijah, 14, 71, 158.  
 Elisha ben Abuja, 50 f., 178, 30.  
 Esau, 19, 81, 86, 88, 104.  
 existence of the world, for whose  
     m., 128-34.  
  
 faith, 3, 37, 42, 43, 45, 56, 90, 90,  
     259; 145, 146, 175-76.  
 family life, 69, 82.  
 farmer (parab.), 112.  
 fasting, 19, 81, 157.  
 fathers, 147 f.  
 fear of God, 45, 53, 83, 99, 100, 115,  
     116, 122.  
 festivals, 40, 85, 88.  
 food (supply of), 11, 61.  
 forty days (in the Ag.), 77, 157.  
 free will, 136.  
 future life, 20, 22, 31, 40, 43, 48, 51,  
     52, 54, 55, 70, 168.  
  
 R. Gamaliel II, 40, 12; 113, 12.  
 R. Gamaliel III, 10, 21, 64.  
 gentiles, merits of, 8, 22, 23, 39, 40,  
     51, 54, 62, 72, 74, 79, 82, 91, 99,  
     102, 109, 129, 187, 192.  
 golden calf, 27, 51, 67, 70, 72, 79, 81,  
     100, 102, 103, 150 f.  
 Grace of God, 10, 12, 13, 56, 67, 77,  
     83, 103, 115, 138.  
  
 Hadrian and his persecutions, 39,  
     50, 59, 105.  
 Hagar, 176.  
 R. Haggai, 13, 47; 88, 237.  
 R. Halafai b. Kahana, 105.  
 Ham, 148.  
 R. Hama b. Hanina, 19, 80, 145,  
     112; 145, 113; 149, 178, 30; 186.  
 Haman, 54.  
 Hananja, Mishaël and Azarja, 57,  
     160.  
 R. Hananja b. Akabja, 59, 93.  
 R. Hananja b. Akasja, 16, 61.  
 R. Hanin, 75, 166; 78, 177; 99,  
     145, 113; 146, 182.  
 R. Hanina b. Dosa, 10, 11, 19, 155.  
 R. Hanina b. Gamaliel, 7.  
 R. Hanina b. Hama, 11, 66, 68, 84,  
     216; 96, 133, 150, 173, 4; 178,  
     29; 190, 192.  
 R. Hanina b. Isaac, 104, 113, 124,  
     154, 167.  
 R. Hanina b. Papa, 91, 163.  
 R. Hanina b. Taradjon, 48.  
 Hannah, 54, 72, 87, 160, 161.  
 R. Hela, 104.  
 R. Helbo, 14, 84, 214; 98, 107.  
 hell, 44, 54, 131, 156, 158, 169, 178,  
     180, 183.  
 Hezekiah, 9, 17, 70, 93, 159.  
 R. Hezekiah, 53, 53;  
 Hezekiah b. Hijja, 68, 151.

- Hijja, 19, 63, 115, 142, 155.  
 R. Hijja b. Abba, 75, 164; 75, 165;  
 78, 177; 83, 86, 142, 146, 151, 161,  
 179, 179, 41; 186, 6.  
 R. Hijja b. Nehemia, 7, 7; 104.  
 Hilfa (or Ilfa), 92.  
 Hillel, 25, 38, 42, 66, 69, 70; 95,  
 105, 165.  
 Hills = mothers, 13, 41, 13; 102.  
 Hiram, 68, 81.  
 R. Hisda, 107.  
 Holy Land, 30, 57, 58, 60, 154, 184.  
 Holy Spirit, 9, 182.  
 Honi ha Meagel, 33.  
 R. Hoshaja, 15, 69, 142.  
 hospitality, m. of, 50, 63, 122.  
 R. Huna, 63, 109; 70, 141; 92, 271;  
 127, 179.  
 R. Huna ha Kohen b. Abun, 103, 313.  
 hypocrisy, 63, 68.  
 ' and ' (interchange), 75, 166;  
 R. Idi, 100, 290; 105, 132.  
 Irenaeus, 116, 137, 147.  
 Isaac, 75, 81, 88, 149, 167.  
 R. Isaac, 13, 19, 65; 83, 84, 215;  
 87, 89, 245; 89, 249; 101, 304;  
 142, 145, 146, 167, 173, 182.  
 Isaiah, 9, 91.  
 R. Ishmael, 11, 43, 60, 65, 132, 182.  
 R. Ishmael b. Jose, 60, 63.  
 R. Ishmael b. Jochanan, 58, 89.  
 Israel, 37, 3, 44, 72, 78, 79, 89, 90,  
 91, 92, 99, 101, 102, 103, 105,  
 129 f.  
 Jabne, 44.  
 Jacob, 20, 65, 76, 80, 82, 84, 85, 88,  
 89, 99, 101, 104, 105, 123, 140, 145,  
 146, 161, 185.  
 R. Jacob b. Idi, 73, 155.  
 R. Jacob of Kefar Hanin, 167.  
 R. Jannai, 17, 20, 68, 190.  
 Jehoiakim, 174.  
 R. Jeremiah, 53, 76, 99, 133, 177.  
 R. Jeremiah b. Abba, 92.  
 Jeremiah (prophet), 86.  
 Jeroboam b. Nebat, 6, 190.  
 Jerusalem, 43, 100, 101.  
 Jethro, 56, 63.  
 Job, 44, 63, 116, 183, 80.  
 R. Jochanan b. Nappacha, 18, 61;  
 71, 145; 74 f., 90, 92, 96, 132, 133,  
 146, 149, 10; 154, 176, 177, 178,  
 30; 183, 183, 80; 185, 192.  
 R. Jochanan b. Zakkai, 38.  
 R. Jonah, 145, 112; 190.  
 R. Jonathan b. Eliezer, 68, 166, 173,  
 4; 174, 9; 181, 192.  
 R. Jose ben Halafta, 8, 21, 54, 60,  
 61, 65, 138, 160, 181.  
 R. Jose b. Hanina, 80, 120, 183, 76;  
 192.  
 R. Jose b. Judah, 61, 76, 170.  
 R. Jose b. Kisma, 48, 65.  
 R. Jose b. Zimra, 17, 70, 73, 163,  
 166.  
 Joseph, merits of, 44, 47, 65, 82, 87,  
 88, 98, 145, 146.  
 Joshua, 56, 84, 90.  
 R. Joshua b. Hananja, 23, 34, 40,  
 41, 42, 65, 186.  
 R. Joshua b. Korha, 59, 103, 117,  
 119, 122, 180.  
 R. Joshua b. Levi, 11, 19, 55, 70, 71,  
 77, 90, 92, 129, 133, 142, 150, 154,  
 155, 161, 181, 183, 184, 81; 187.  
 R. Joshua b. Nehemia, 101, 104,  
 124, 167, 55.  
 Josiah, 93, 159.  
 R. Josiah, 93, 159, 174, 9;  
 Jotham, 52.  
 Judah, m. of, 44, 55, 78, 89, 101.  
 R. Judah I, 60, 62, 63, 159, 178.  
 R. Judah II, 78, 101, 265; 178, 28.  
 R. Judah b. Ezekiel, 107, 115, 137.  
 R. Judah b. Ilai, 16, 59; 18, 55, 65,  
 115, 144, 154, 23; 158, 159, 181,  
 183.  
 R. Judah b. Menasseh, 82.  
 R. Judah b. Shalom, 100, 299; 103,  
 113, 145, 163.  
 R. Judah b. Simon, 75, 166; 76,  
 163; 78, 177; 92, 132, 142, 146.  
 R. Judan, 19, 19, 65; 103, 122, 178,  
 33; 192.  
 R. Judan b. Hanan, 13, 48.  
 R. Judan b. Rabbi, 13, 48.  
 Justin Martyr, 40, 10; 108.  
 R. Katina, 176.  
 R. Kerspedai, 75.  
 king (parab.), 80, 85, 98, 120, 123,  
 132, 135, 140, 143, 149, 152.  
 Korah, 54, 160, 161.  
 Laban, 82, 88.  
 landowner (parab.), 112.  
 R. Levi, 18, 61; 19, 62, 103; 78, 83,  
 88, 91, 265; 112, 118, 123, 130,  
 133, 136, 140, 143, 145, 146, 154,  
 169, 176, 25; 183, 192.  
 light, 16, 59; 80, 99.  
 lily = Israel, 113, 132.

- liturgy, 12, 13, 76, 149, 156, 168, 186, 6.  
 Lot, 53, 70, 75, 87, 92.  
 Lydda, 71.
- manna, 42, 61, 76, 81, 89, 99, 103, 145.  
 Mar Zutra, 18, 62.  
 market (parab.), 115, 116.  
 marriage, with heathen woman, 170.  
 martyrs, m. of, 57, 105.  
 R. Mathna, 127.  
 R. Matja b. Heresh, 10, 47, 55, 65, 143.  
 R. Meir, 23, 33, 34, 49 f., 55, 72; 124, 126, 131, 133, 150, 159, 178, 30; 180, 45; 182, 183.  
 R. Menachem b. Jose, 61, 77, 172; 178, 30; 181.  
 R. Menachem b. Zeira, 105.  
 Menasseh, 70.  
 Messiah, 7, 14, 52, 56, 79, 88, 99, 104, 182.  
 Mezuzah, 50, 159.  
 military service, 85.  
 Miriam, 61, 65, 76, 103, 145.  
 Miriam bath Tanhum, 170.  
 modesty, 67, 85, 89.  
 Moloch worship, 54.  
 Monobazus, 21.  
 Mordecai, 90, 93, 159.  
 Moses, m. of, 6, 7, 21, 30, 44, 55, 59, 64, 65, 67, 70, 76, 89, 91, 100, 103, 104, 133, 143, 145, 160, 163.  
 mountains = fathers, 13, 93, 102, 123, 147, 174.  
 myrtle, 18, 61.
- R. Nahman, 78, 179; 105, 173, 6.  
 R. Nathan, 62, 65, 141.  
 Nebuchadnezzar, 68, 81, 192.  
 Nehemia, book of, 92.  
 R. Nehemia I, 21, 56, 58, 87; 65; 70, 144; 143, 149, 159, 176, 23; 178.  
 R. Nehemia II, 109.  
 Nero, 34.  
 Noah, 58, 67, 86, 91, 162, 176.
- observances, m. of, 6, 30; 22, 43, 48, 55, 57, 61, 69, 73, 77, 97, 100, 103, 143, 149, 166, 179 ff.  
 Og, 53.  
 Omer, 73, 77, 82, 90, 183.  
 oral law, 179.  
 orchard (in parab.), 132.
- Origen, 69, 109.  
 Orpah, 89.  
 orphan, 22.
- pearl (in parab.), 67.  
 Pentekaka, 31, 191.  
 Persian influence on the Agadah, 21, 186, 6; 191.  
 Pharoah, 63, 87.  
 Philo, 108.  
 Ps. Philo, 146, 114; 152.  
 R. Phinehas b. Hanna, 19, 75, 164; 102, 142, 94; 142, 97; 147, 2; 152.  
 plague in Sepphoris, 69.  
 prayer, 43, 44, 50, 60, 70, 71, 75, 76, 78, 79, 84, 86, 103, 129, 151, 153, 157, 161, 167, 167, 191.  
 Proselytes, 33, 52, 55, 99, 114, 121, 160, 168.
- Rab, 11, 31; 77, 173; 92, 107, 154, 173, 4.  
 Raba, 11, 40; 34, 76, 169; 107.  
 Rabbanan, 55, 70, 123.  
 Rabbi, 49, 29; 55, 70; 60, 98.  
 Rachel, 99.  
 Rahab, 53, 86.  
 rain, 40, 71, 84, 90, 251; 102, 129, 130, 176, 179.  
 redemption (future), 12, 14, 53, 55, 56, 78, 81, 82, 84, 87, 90, 146.  
 repentance, 29, 44, 53, 68, 73, 78, 146, 183.  
 resurrection, 54, 87, 89, 182.  
 Reuben, 7, 99.  
 R. Reuben, 99.  
 righteous, number of, 53, 57, 73; 133, 70; live for ever, 150, 12; death of 67, 68, 78, 80, 82, 85, 103.  
 Rome, 19, 39, 48, 49, 81.
- Sabbath, 40, 53, 60, 87, 90, 101, 146, 179.  
 Sacrifices, 67, 81, 87, 101, 102, 151, 154.  
 Sarah, 81.  
 Samuel (R.), 104, 327; 107, 154.  
 R. Samuel b. Ami, 105.  
 R. Samuel b. Isaac, 18, 61; 93, 140.  
 R. Samuel b. Nahmani, 14, 69, 132; 78, 81, 100, 294; 123, 130, 133, 140, 146, 151, 167, 56; 173, 183, 184, 81.  
 Saul, 64, 90, 94, 192.  
 seal, 116.

- Sepphoris, 69, 71.  
 sheep (parab.), 68.  
 R. Sheila, 107.  
 Shemaiah, 37, 42, 47, 56, 64, 95, 176, 21.  
 Shimei, 93, 151.  
 Sibylline oracles, 108.  
 R. Simai, 63, 145, 187.  
 R. Simlai, 30.  
 R. Simon b. Abba, 83, 90.  
 Simon b. Azzai, 75, 116.  
 R. Simon b. Eleazar, 7, 61, 117, 191.  
 R. Simon b. Halafta, 63, 115, 142, 144, 101;  
 R. Simon b. Jehozadak, 70.  
 R. Simon b. Jochai, 7, 9; 9, 19, 21, 52, 55, 59, 60, 65, 119, 124, 133, 144, 155, 159, 173, 174, 179, 179, 35; 182, 184, 81;  
 R. Simon b. Lakish, 18, 54, 64; 77, 173; 78 f., 91, 265; 112, 129, 146, 159, 32; 173, 4; 173, 7; 177, 178, 183, 80;  
 R. Simon b. Menassja, 62, 117.  
 R. Simon b. Pazzi, 19, 73, 154; 71, 83, 86, 90, 162.  
 R. Simon b. Rabbi, 189.  
 Simon b. Zoma, 46, 116.  
 Simon of Katron, 47, 65, 93, 145, 146.  
 Simon of Teman, 46, 65, 145.  
 sin, 4, 6, 54, 57, 60, 64, 72, 75; imputed sin, 185 ff.  
 Smyrna, Jews in, 110.  
 solidarity, idea of, 4, 68, 71, 72, 95, 187.  
 Stoic philosophy and Agadah, 18, 35, 108 f., 128 f., 160.  
 stone = fathers, 42, 79, 81, 169.  
 straw, chaff, &c. (parab.), 109.  
 Synhedrion, 84, 85, 221, 105.  
 Tabernacle, 53, 72, 82, 129, 133, 184.  
 Tabi, slave of R. Gam., 7.  
 R. Tahlifa, of Caesarea, 92, 122.  
 R. Tanhuma, 104.  
 R. Tanhum b. Abba, 126, 151, 17;  
 R. Tanhum b. Hija, 187, 11;  
 R. Tarphon, 44, 55, 65.  
 teachers of the Mishnah, 179.  
 ten Commandments, 70, 133.  
 Tertullian, 3, 170.  
 Theodosius of Rome, 33, 41.  
 thornbush (parab.), 105.  
 tithe, 55, 60, 90, 92, 101, 127, 182.  
 Torah, 50, 57, 60, 61, 69, 73, 75, 77, 78, 81, 83, 85, 86, 90, 92, 99, 100, 101, 124 f., 133, 144, 149, 176 ff.  
 treasure, 15, 20, 53, 54, 59, 63, 64, 91, 265; 92.  
 tree = Torah, 119, 124.  
 Tribes, m. of, 47, 88, 100, 101, 124, 145, 150.  
 true Israel, 70, 119 f.  
 twenty-six generations, 125, 132.  
 Usha, 50, 54.  
 vine (parab.), 104.  
 vow, 60, 62, 159.  
 wealth, 34, 49  
 wheat (parab.), 110, 8; 112, 132.  
 wisdom = Torah, 125.  
 women, 27, 44, 63, 98, 102, 142.  
 world, end of, 28, 113, 129, 147;  
 two worlds, 105, 114, 168, 182.  
 worship, 87.  
 R. Zabdi b. Levi, 92, 154.  
 R. Zebida, 72, 148; 147, 150.  
 Zedekia, 84, 174.  
 R. Zeira, 18, 61; 93, 190.  
 Zion, 81, 127.  
 Zizith, 159.



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